JUNE 2, 2003

The Sanctimonious Mr. Bennett · Katha Pollitt

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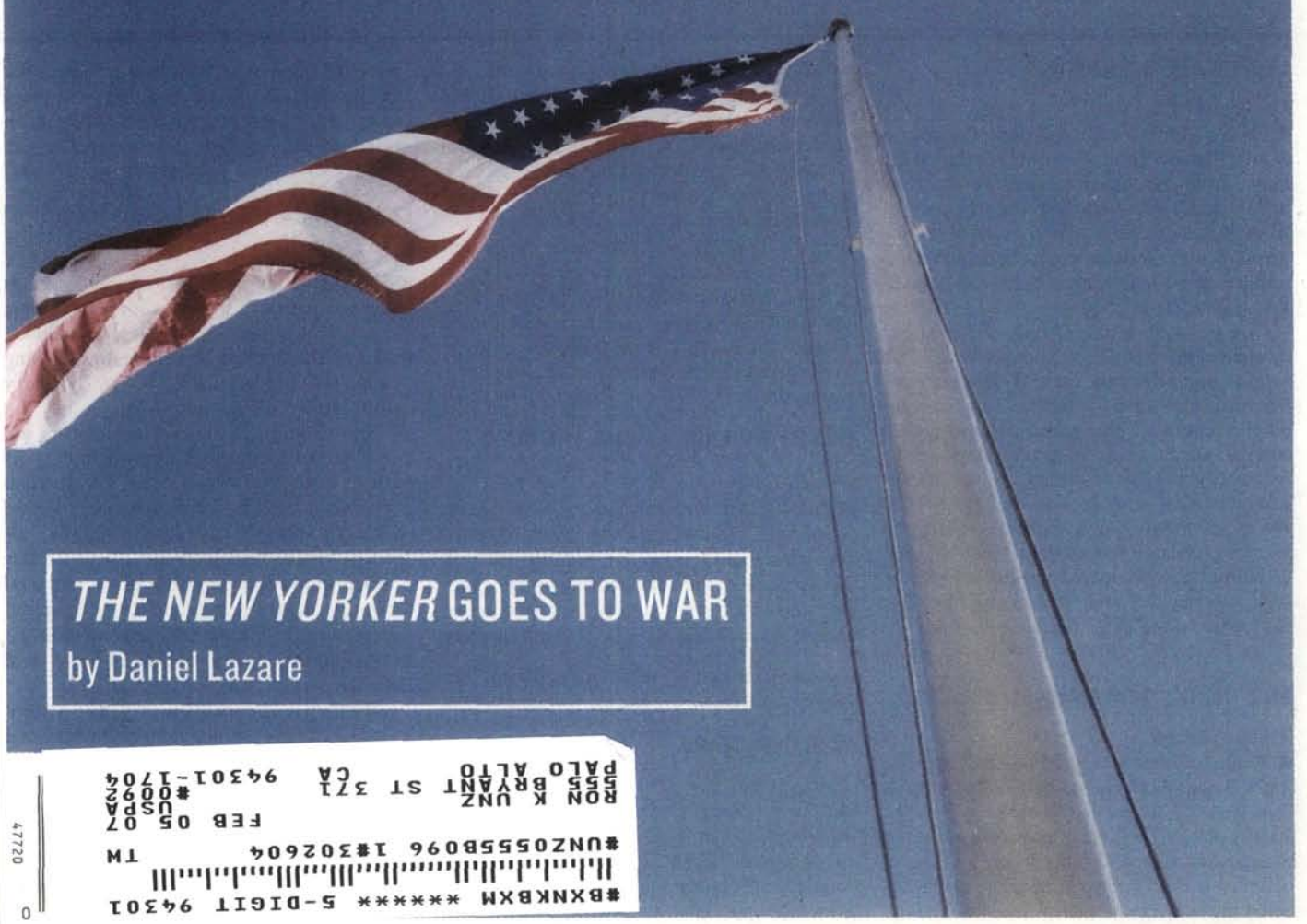
The Nation.

WE ARE THE PATRIOTS

by GORE VIDAL



THE NEW YORKER GOES TO WAR

by Daniel Lazare

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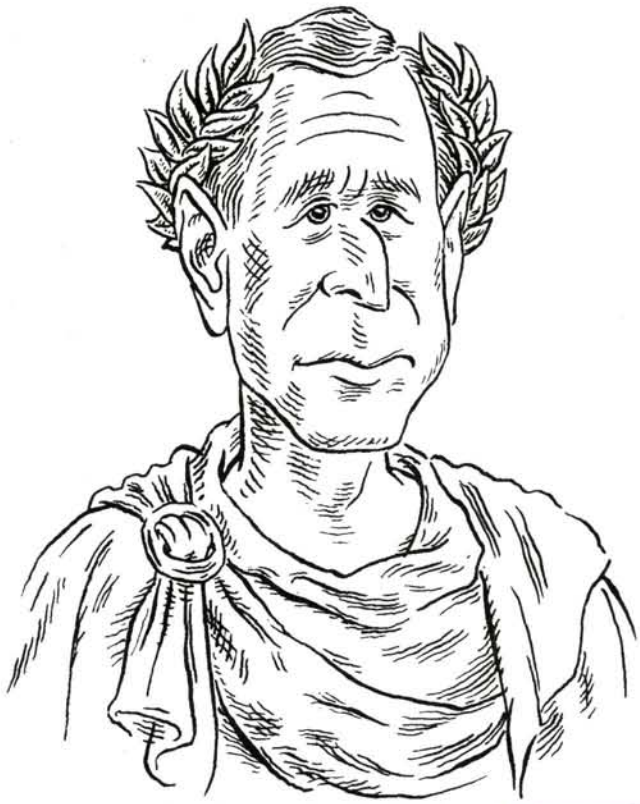

THE MYRTLE CROWN

Now that it looks like we are going to have an empire, perhaps we should adopt the ancient Roman custom of decorating the heads of victorious leaders with wreaths of leaves. A wreath of laurels signified the highest honor, but there were others. According to William Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, a crown of myrtle "was given to those who merely deserved an ovation, which happened when the war was not duly declared, or was carried on against a very inferior force, or with persons not considered by the laws of nations as lawful enemies, such as slaves or pirates; or when the victory was obtained without danger, difficulty, or bloodshed." —ROBERT GROSSMAN

LETTERS

LEGITIMATE? I THINK NOT

The Bronx, NY

■ The good old *Nation* has done it again. A terrific front cover by Art Spiegelman on the May 5 issue. But three pages later ("Tomorrow in Baghdad") we are told that "the only claim of legitimacy the Administration can make for the war it misled America into is that it was a humanitarian war to liberate an oppressed people." Whence the legitimacy?

Are we back to condoning unilateral humanitarian intervention, in contravention of the bedrock principle of the United Nations Charter that the use of force by one nation against another is legitimate only as self-defense against an actual armed attack? Which oppressed people will a "coalition of the willing" bomb into liberation next, by leave of *Nation* editors? North Korea, Iran, Syria, Libya, Cuba? A sincere and vigorous human rights program would be welcome from this or any Administration, starting with, say, Saudi Arabia, Russia or China. But not with total war as the means to that end.

PETER WEISS

AND THE DUCT-TAPE AWARD GOES TO...

Ashland, Mass.

■ Stephen Cohen's May 5 editorial "Are We Safer?" is spot on. He has nailed the issues as they need to be articulated. Those people of conscience (the left) who were against the war failed to articulate Cohen's points. The warmongers and their mass supporters successfully sloganeered the war around patriotism and the flag, while the left could not effectively respond.

Patriotism should be sold (I hate phrasing it this way) in terms of the question, Are we more secure now than we were before the war? And showing where, why and how we're in even more danger. As a patriot, I want to shield my country from further harm and antagonism, not provoke it. Sadly, most Americans don't want to hear a cogent argument, just a bullet point on a PowerPoint presentation. As business does, that is the way we should sell the antiwar. Going forward, the left must reduce Cohen's questions to bumper-sticker format and beat that bumper-sticker drum.

IMRAN NASRULLAH

SILVER THREADS AMONG THE GOLD

Brooklyn, NY

■ Thank you for placing Janeane Garofalo on the April 28 subscription-ad page. My two roommates and I, all in our mid-20s, are avid *Nation* readers, and it is refreshing to see someone whose hair is not yet gray representing the face of *Nation* readers.

ZACH BERMAN

Janeane Garofalo is just the beginning. See page 28 and upcoming issues. —THE EDITORS

WAR CLASSFARE

Voorhees, NJ

■ Robert L. Borosage, in "Sacrifice Is for Suckers" [April 28], expands nicely on my own view of George W.'s effort. It's a war with class—fought mainly by the working class, for the benefit of the upper class and (sooner or later) paid for by the middle class. At first I thought our President had discovered something new, but I quickly realized that wars have always been done this way—another reason to oppose them.

HAYDON ROCHESTER JR.

COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWN?

New York City

■ The Communications Workers of America has a contract to negotiate with Verizon this summer. And it used *The Nation* as its soapbox in preparation for that bargaining by attacking Verizon in "Telecom Labor Rising," by Larry Cohen and Steve Early [April 28].

The problems in the telecom industry are not of Verizon's making. The entire industry is hurting, and everyone knows that. Wireless and cable companies are making dramatic inroads, regulatory decisions force companies like Verizon to subsidize our competitors, the poor economy has meant spending cutbacks by our customers. All these factors taken together have had a dramatic effect on our business and industry. In order to continue to provide jobs and great customer service, we must respond.

The truth is, last year Verizon had 15 percent fewer service complaints from customers, and 24 percent fewer complaints directed to state regulators. At the same time, J.D. Power and Associates and other consumer organizations recognized Verizon for strong service.

Unfortunately, the CWA hasn't done its part to help improve the situation. When Verizon

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EDITORIALS

Shaking the Kingdom

The suicide attacks in Riyadh, which Saudi officials blamed on Al Qaeda, were barbarous acts. They are also tragic reminders that despite US military victories and recent triumphalist claims of the Bush Administration, the terrorist threat has not been eliminated.

Rather, we are witnessing the opening of a new chapter in what is likely to be a protracted struggle over the future of the Persian Gulf region. Much of the Arab world views the United States as a neocolonial power, an occupying force coveting their oil, hostile to their interests and openly biased toward Israel and its brutal occupation of Palestinian lands. A determined minority see us not only as imperialists but also as infidels despoiling Islamic holy sites and propping up reprehensible regimes like the Saudi monarchy. Though they may be comparatively few in number, their anti-American agenda draws wide support among the populations of the Saudi kingdom, Kuwait and Iraq.

Significantly, one of the bombers' targets was the headquarters of Vinnell, a Virginia-based consulting firm. Since the 1970s it has trained the Saudi National Guard, which protects the ruling family from its subjects. Not only is Vinnell a US company; it is a quasi-official arm of the US government and thus a direct link to the Saudi rulers. Although the Bush Administration would like Americans to believe that Muslim terrorists hate us because they envy our way of life, in reality they despise our policies—primarily, US support of the corrupt Saudi regime, unilateral occupation of Iraq and uncritical backing of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The major flaw in the Bush Administration's current antiterror strategy is its primary reliance on militarism and unilateralism, emphasizing approaches like "regime change" and "preemption" by US armed forces. Instead, the United States should work cooperatively with anti-crime agencies of other nations in an international law-enforcement effort aimed at hunting down terrorist groups, which operate independently of nation-states. Furthermore, an effective strategy for reducing terrorist attacks must enter the realm of politics and policy. It must first answer two questions: Is our policy in Iraq in the best interest of the Iraqi people? And does our tolerance of the Israeli occupation really promote Israel's security, since it stirs up greater enmity among Arabs? If we want to generate reform and democracy in the region and reduce the cycle of violence, we must stand for policies that are in the best interest of the Arab people as well as our own.

This will create difficult dilemmas. Given that the United States, owing to its invasion of Iraq, is now an occupying power in that country, we must find a way to fulfill our responsibility for the reconstruction of Iraq while avoiding antagonizing Muslims and Arab nationalists. A good first step would be to move quickly to internationalize the process by bringing in the United Nations more centrally and supporting the appointment of a UN official as prime administrator.

The other important step is to break the Israeli-Palestinian impasse. We must show the Arab world that the United States is serious about finding a just solution to the conflict and will no longer tolerate the delaying tactics of the Sharon government.

Only by internationalizing policy in the region can we avoid polarizing it between pro- and anti-American passions.

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WMD? MIA

When Bush (sans flight suit) delivered a photo-op victory speech to the men and women of the USS Abraham Lincoln, he solemnly noted, "We've begun the search for hidden chemical and biological weapons and already know of hundreds of sites that will be investigated." This attempt at assurance was disingenuous and a continuation of one of the Administration's Big Lies of the war on Iraq: We had to invade *now* to protect you from terrible weapons of mass destruction.

A list of sites that still required investigation weeks after most of the fighting was finished was an indication that Bush had not moved quickly to counter the threat he had claimed existed. On May 7, Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone noted that before the war the Pentagon drew up a list of about 600 sites possibly related to weapons of mass destruction. Only seventy had been examined by the military's WMD-hunters, along with another forty sites added to the roster during the war. No unconventional weapons were found. The President didn't mention that on the carrier. Nor did he mention that his Administration had not mounted an all-out WMD search-and-secure mission. And as a series of *Washington Post* stories show, looters ransacked key nuclear facilities before US units looking for WMDs arrived. Partially enriched uranium and other radioactive material—as well as documents covering nuclear weapons design matters—are presumed missing. Were the plunderers petty thieves or the terrorists Bush claimed were in Iraq in search of WMDs? In any event, the war has been a boon to would-be dirty-bomb makers.

The leisurely pace and less than comprehensive nature of the WMD hunt borders on the criminal. The Pentagon's new, 2,000-person Iraq Survey Team—which will look for WMDs as one of several missions—is not scheduled to hit Iraq until the end of May. (The Bush Administration has not invited the UN to participate in the inspections.) Why was such a force of specialists not assembled before the war and ready to roll when the invasion was launched? At this point, a WMD search may unearth evidence to shore up Bush's claim that Saddam Hussein had WMDs, but it is unlikely to prevent unconventional weaponry and related material from falling into the wrong hands. The time for that sort of mission is long gone.

Bush was fooling the sailors of the Lincoln—and the rest of the nation—when he suggested that the WMD search was only beginning. The Johnny-come-lately Iraq Survey Team is a follow-up to a smaller effort that's mostly a bust. At the war's end, the 75th Exploitation Task Force started looking for WMDs. By mid-May, it was shutting down. Col. Robert Smith, one of its key officers, told the *Post* the unit's leaders no longer thought that "we're going to find chemical rounds sitting next to a gun.... That's what we came here for, but we're past that." The 75th focused on a short list of nineteen high-priority sites and sixty-eight non-WMD sites that might hold useful clues; it managed to examine seventeen of the former and forty-five of the latter. Its members were disappointed and frustrated. They had expected to find what Secretary of State Colin Powell described during his UN presentation: evidence of a nuclear weapons program, hundreds of tons of chemical and bio-

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logical agents along with missiles to carry them. They uncovered nothing. Col. Richard McPhee, who commanded the 75th, said, "Do I know where [the WMDs] are? I wish I did...but we will find them. Or not. I don't know. I'm being honest here." More honest than his Commander in Chief.

The Pentagon said recently it had discovered a tractor-trailer its experts believe was a mobile bioweapons lab, perhaps one of several; other experts are uncertain. But even if the Pentagon discovers unconventional weapons or components, that will not undo the Administration's failure to act swiftly to thwart what it described as a clear and present danger. Few official voices have demanded that the White House explain its decision not to launch a massive WMD search. Representative Edward Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, wrote Bush asking him why there was a one-month delay in securing nuclear sites. But are any of the prominent presidential candidates willing to challenge the President on this matter? Are there no independent-minded Republicans interested in holding hearings on it? (Richard Lugar, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, this means you.) Bush either misled the nation with his prewar WMDs-are-falling rhetoric, or he failed to move vigorously to counter the threat he himself had proclaimed. In either case, his victory in Iraq is tainted. DAVID CORN

See a *related editorial by Ian Williams at www.thenation.com.*

FCC: Public Be Damned

Cheered on by the Bush Administration and powerful media conglomerates, Federal Communications Commission chair Michael Powell is pushing ahead with a June 2 vote to gut longstanding rules designed to prevent the growth of media monopolies. If successful, Powell's push could, in the words of dissident commissioner Michael Copps, "dramatically [alter] our nation's media landscape without the kind of debate and analysis that these issues clearly merit." Copps and the other Democratic commissioner, Jonathan Adelstein, have asked for a thirty-day delay in the vote, but Powell has the upper hand—he and two other Republican commissioners form a majority on the five-member FCC. The chairman will not win without a fight, however, as his decision to force a vote on rule changes that have not been broadly debated or analyzed has provoked a fierce response from the widest coalition of critics ever to weigh in on an FCC rule-making decision.

Powell's contempt for public opinion, evidenced by his scheduling of only one official hearing on the proposed rule changes, is so great that he refused invitations to nine semiofficial hearings at which other commissioners were present. The hearings drew thousands of citizens and close to universal condemnation of the rule changes. Likewise, an examination of roughly half the 18,000 public statements filed electronically with the FCC show that 97 percent of them oppose permitting more media concentration. Even media moguls Barry Diller and Ted Turner have raised objections, with Turner complaining, "There's really five companies that control 90 percent of what we read, see and hear. It's not healthy."

Outraged by Powell's antidemocratic approach, Common Cause has launched a national petition drive demanding a delay in the vote, while web activists at MoveOn.org are highlighting the issue in bulletins and calling on the "media corps" they organized to monitor media bias during the Iraq war to turn its energies toward stopping the FCC vote. Consumers Union and Free Press, a national media-reform network, have launched a letter-writing campaign to Congress and the FCC from www.mediareform.net. Local governments are also getting involved; the Chicago City Council urged rejection of the proposed changes in a resolution that declared: "Unchecked media consolidation benefits a small number of corporate interests at the expense of the public interest."

Noting that the consolidation of radio ownership that followed passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act has proven disastrous for pop music, journalism and local communities, Bonnie Raitt, Billy Joel, Don Henley, Patti Smith, Pearl Jam and other musicians signed a letter telling Powell they were "extremely concerned as American citizens that increased concentration of media ownership will have a negative impact on access to diverse viewpoints and will impede the functioning of our democracy." Nearly 300 academics signed a letter to the FCC protesting Powell's refusal to allow an evaluation of the "research" he has talked of using to justify relaxing the media ownership rules. The national associations of Hispanic and black journalists called on the FCC to delay action until more study of threats to diversity could be completed. Leaders of the AFL-CIO, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Consumer Federation of America and many other groups argued that Powell had not allowed enough time to analyze the potential damage to democracy.

On Capitol Hill, nearly 100 House Democrats signed a letter by Representatives Bernie Sanders, Maurice Hinchey and Sherrod Brown calling on Powell to delay the June 2 vote on the rules, open the process to public comment and demonstrate how his proposed changes in ownership limits will serve the public interest by promoting diversity, competition and localism. Fifteen senators, led by Maine Republican Olympia Snowe, declared in a letter to the FCC: "We believe it is virtually impossible to serve the public interest in this extremely important and highly complex proceeding without letting the public know about and comment on the changes you intend to make to these critical rules."

The stirrings in Congress prodded the Bush Administration and its allies. Commerce Secretary Don Evans urged Powell to proceed with the June 2 vote regardless of the opposition, and business-friendly members of the House echoed that call. But the political climate surrounding media ownership has become so electric that nothing should be taken for granted. Twelve of the fifteen senators who signed the Snowe letter to Powell are members of the Commerce Committee, and committee chair John McCain—though he did not sign the letter—has overseen three recent hearings at which sharp criticisms of FCC moves promoting media consolidation were raised both by Democratic and Republican senators. McCain says he will call the FCC commissioners to a hearing after June 2, and he may yet join efforts to have Congress renew at least some of the rules. In addition, Senate Appropriations Committee chair Ted Stevens and David Obey, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee,

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COMMENT

are making noises about having Congress step in to defend controls against monopoly. Even if Powell prevails on June 2, the tempest will continue to grow. He may ultimately be remembered not for loosening the rules but for pushing so hard he woke America up, forcing public-interest concerns back into the debate over media ownership. JOHN NICHOLS AND ROBERT W. MCCHESNEY

John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney are the authors of Our Media, Not Theirs: The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media *(Seven Stories).*

The Judiciary Wars

Senate Democrats, who were so divided on the war and tax cuts, are holding together impressively to stop the Worst of the Worst of President Bush's judicial nominees. Filibusters against Miguel Estrada and Priscilla Owen have prevailed, and every Democrat on the Judiciary Committee recently voted against Carolyn Kuhl, setting up another likely filibuster if this antichoice nominee's candidacy reaches the floor.

A recognition has dawned on almost all the Senate Democrats that Bush is trying to remake America through his lifetime appointments to the federal bench. He is attempting to pack the courts with zealots and activists who are not impartial and who will legislate from the bench. The Senate Democrats have finally realized that this is an assault on their electoral base—women, minorities, workers, consumers—and even conservatives like Fritz Hollings and Mary Landrieu are holding fast on the filibuster. Democratic minority leader Tom Daschle has made the rejection of extremist judges a test of his leadership. Before the filibuster began against Estrada, Daschle told his conference, "We are in this through the tenth cloture vote and the twentieth cloture vote," signaling he would resign as leader if there were defections in the midst of battle.

Nan Aron, the president of the Alliance for Justice, which monitors judicial nominations, credits the tenacity of Daschle, along with Charles Schumer, Patrick Leahy and Ted Kennedy, with making the filibuster strategy work. "Schumer is a tiger," she says. "There is leadership here."

These judicial fights are in effect spring training for the coming battle over Supreme Court vacancies expected this summer. The Democrats are sending Bush the message—in neon—that they have sufficient cohesion to stop any nominees in the image of Clarence Thomas or Antonin Scalia.

Daschle has pointed out that the Democrats have failed to confirm only two of Bush's 126 judicial nominees so far (several others are still under consideration). Republicans blocked sixty-five of Bill Clinton's nominees—including fifty who were never even given the courtesy of a hearing. The Democrats have been shrewdly selective, choosing to oppose only the most fanatical ideologues like Kuhl, Charles Pickering, James Leon Holmes, Owen and Estrada.

Bush and Senate majority leader Bill Frist keep seeking roll calls on Estrada, cynically thinking they can gain Hispanic votes next year by creating a Hispanic martyr and accusing liberals of racial prejudice. But Estrada, who was born in Honduras, remains unknown in Latino communities; and both the Puerto Rican and Mexican legal defense funds oppose him. The Republicans are also crying "politics of personal destruction." But they forget that the modern judicial wars began when Republicans successfully filibustered against LBJ's nomination of Abe Fortas for Chief Justice in 1968, and when Representative Gerald Ford launched an effort to impeach Justice William O. Douglas in 1970, making the baseless charge of organized crime ties. Robert Bork was defeated in 1987, but that fight was strictly over his ideas, not any alleged personal vices.

Several Democrats think a speech by biographer Robert Caro at a Senate retreat last year helped give Daschle a renewed sense of the Senate's role in history as an instrument of social justice. "Caro's speech and his book on LBJ definitely influenced Daschle," Schumer says. "But so did losing control of the Senate. That made the filibuster relevant as a tactic." The first two chapters of Caro's *Master of the Senate* invoke the power and mystique of this coequal branch of government and show how a few "eloquent, courageous senators, men of principles and ideals," like Paul Douglas, Herbert Lehman and Hubert Humphrey, became "icons in the fight for social justice."

Republican frustration is now mounting. Recently Frist launched an assault on the filibuster itself, calling it unconstitutional. But the filibuster dates back to 1806, and its mandate is in the Senate's own Rule 22. In 1917 the Senate adopted the cloture rule, requiring a two-thirds vote to end debate, later reduced to sixty votes. It would require sixty-seven votes to modify Rule 22, and fifty-five is the most the GOP has mustered to shut down the Estrada filibuster. Some GOP senators are threatening a court case to challenge the filibuster's constitutionality. But Article I, Section 5 of the Constitution clearly gives each house of Congress the power to "determine the rules of its proceedings." The GOP chair of the Judiciary Committee, Orrin Hatch, is even considering sending Kuhl's nomination to the floor. This would violate the Senate's long tradition of courtesy that says if both home-state

CALVIN TRILLIN

WAL-MART BANS *MAXIM*, *STUFF* AND *FHM*

Now Wal-Mart's banned those mags for lads
But so far hasn't banned the scads
Of other soft-core porn on view—
Like busty dolls that do kung fu,
Or undie ads by Calvin Klein,
Or covers showing dames supine
In racy books that go too far,
Or anything by Kenneth Starr.

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COMMENT

senators oppose a nominee, that nomination is dead. Both Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein oppose Kuhl, a California resident and judge.

These judgeship wars are about things that matter profoundly—abortion, affirmative action, civil liberties, equal rights, court-packing, extremism and the Constitution's granting the Senate the power of "advice and consent" on judicial appointments. With Republicans controlling the presidency and both houses of Congress, the courts are the last flood wall against repression and the erosion of rights.

During America's first century, the Senate blocked one out of every four presidential nominees for the Supreme Court. The Constitution made the Senate a coequal branch of government and gave senators longer terms in office than the President. Senators are just doing their job by weeding out unfit judges, selected for their ideology and party loyalty. Perhaps Robert Caro will one day write a new chapter, recalling a season when some modern senators had principles they fought for to the end. JACK NEWFIELD

Jack Newfield is a senior fellow at the Nation Institute.

Paying for Apartheid

Two major lawsuits—filed in the United States against multinational corporations including GM, IBM and Citigroup for aiding and abetting apartheid—are at a critical juncture. Their outcomes could set legal standards by which corporations are held accountable for cooperating with regimes that violate human rights. This possibility has sent shock waves through international corporate boardrooms, which also fear court orders to release files that would expose apartheid-era activities.

The plaintiffs include a diversity of apartheid victims, including prominent author Dennis Brutus, who was shot in the back and imprisoned by the South African security police; Sigqibo Mpendulo, whose teenage sons were murdered in their living room by security police; and Dorothy Molefi, the mother of Hector Peterson, who was shot to death by police when he was 13 at the start of the Soweto uprising of 1976. The photo of his limp body in the arms of a friend has become an iconic image of the victims.

Ntombi Mosikare, who works for the Khulumani Support Group, a South African organization that is a lead plaintiff and represents apartheid victims, said, "Those that helped the apartheid government do its dirty work should be made to pay."

US attorneys Diane Sammons and Ed Fagan were the first to file. Their suit includes employment discrimination claims and asks for unspecified monetary relief. Currently there are eight lead plaintiffs in the class-action suit, which could expand to millions of plaintiffs. Michael Hausfeld and Agnieszka Fryszman filed their lawsuit five months later, in November. It seeks unspecified individual damages on behalf of Khulumani itself and ninety-two of the 33,000 victims represented by Khulumani. Both suits include South African attorneys.

On May 19, a federal judge, John Sprizzo, of US District Court, Southern District of New York, a Reagan appointee, will for the first time make substantive rulings on the initial lawsuit (combined with a similar suit filed by Connecticut lawyers). On May 28, a federal judicial panel is expected to decide whether all the lawsuits should be consolidated.

The approximately thirty US and European defendants—some are in both lawsuits—include banks (e.g., Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, UBS AG, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, Barclays Bank), oil companies (Shell and ExxonMobil), vehicle manufacturers (Ford, DaimlerChrysler, GM) and technology companies (IBM and Unisys). The complaints claim that the banks provided the funding that kept the apartheid government in power; that without oil, the police and military could not have functioned and the economy would have collapsed; that vehicle manufacturers supplied military vehicles and that technology companies supplied the resources for the national identity system. Companies were targeted not simply for doing business with South Africa but for allegedly supporting the apartheid system and profiting from crimes against humanity.

Business heavyweights, including the US Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Foreign Trade Council, have backed up the corporations, criticizing the law on which the reparations suits are based. Known as the Alien Tort Claims Act, which dates from 1789, it grants US courts jurisdiction over certain violations of international law. This act formed the basis of Holocaust lawsuits, which were successfully argued by some of the lead lawyers in the South African cases.

"Business was central to the economy that sustained the South African state during the apartheid years," concluded the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated the crimes of apartheid. One witness, Craig Williamson, a self-confessed bomb killer and undercover agent, testified, "Our weapons, ammunition, uniforms, vehicles, radios and other equipment were all developed and provided by industry. Our finances and banking were done by bankers who even gave us covert credit cards for covert operations."

IBM conceded that its equipment may have been used for repressive purposes, but also noted that "it's not really our policy to tell our customers how to conduct themselves," according to a 1985 *Washington Post* article.

While most of the corporations refused to comment on the lawsuits, Shell South Africa said it "vigorously denies any suggestion that the company was supportive of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Shell remained in South Africa during the apartheid era because we felt that to leave was not the best way to bring about change and development." Similarly, a spokesperson for ExxonMobil commented that it "condemns the violation of human rights in any form, including the apartheid policies of the former South African government."

Not surprisingly, governments are joining the corporate side. In April, Switzerland, which was a key supporter of South Africa during apartheid, shut down public access to archives documenting corporate links to the apartheid government. A spokesperson for the Swiss finance ministry said that since other countries were not offering comparable access, "opening our files would be a disadvantage to Swiss companies."

(Continued on Page 24)

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Madmen

During the cold war, nuclear strategic doctrine was riven by a fundamental contradiction. Governments thought it sensible to threaten nuclear war—the better to "deter" a foe from doing something unwanted—yet it obviously made no sense actually to wage nuclear war, for this led to the famous "mutual assured destruction." But if carrying out the threats was senseless, then how could it be frightening? What use were they? Wouldn't the foe, supposing that no country would be demented enough to "assure" its own destruction, disbelieve the threats and do what it pleased in spite of them?

The high strategists of nuclear defense scratched their heads and came up with answers. One was to take technical and other steps that deliberately put your nation on what the strategist Thomas Schelling called a "slippery slope." That is, if you visibly arranged to make yourself a little bit out of control, the foe would no longer be able to imagine that you might desist from nuclear war in a last-minute fit of sanity. They'd think that you might plunge into the abyss in spite of yourself. And so they would fear you, as hoped. (The inexorable mobilization schedules of World War I acted thus, once diplomacy had broken down, to assure the start of a war that was in no one's interest.) Another solution, also pioneered by Schelling, among others, was the deliberate cultivation of a reputation of irrationality. Schelling called this policy the "rationality of irrationality." In this policy, the foe would believe in your self-destructive threats not because it thought you might slip on a banana peel, so to speak, at the brink but because it believed you just might be lunatic enough to go over the edge deliberately.

Richard Nixon was one practitioner of this strategy. When he came to office, he planned to end the Vietnam War on terms favorable to the United States by frightening North Vietnam and the Soviet Union into compliance. He hoped, by persuading them that he was just a little bit off his rocker, to scare them into submission. He called the strategy the "madman theory." In practice, however, it failed. The Russians and the North Vietnamese ignored the threat and went on to win the war.

When the cold war ended, most people probably bid an unfond farewell to these blood-freezing paradoxes, along with the Soviet-American nuclear arms race that had given rise to them. They may be surprised, therefore, to find them returning in the new context of what many call the second nuclear age (the first having consisted of the cold war). Recently, the United States—the world's "only superpower," or "hyperpower," as the French say—has found itself in a nuclear stalemate with tiny, poverty-stricken but (probably) nuclear-armed North Korea. North Korea has rediscovered the madman theory with a vengeance. It cannot be in the interest of North Korea, to state what is sickeningly obvious, to get into a nuclear war with the United States. At the moment, North Korea is incapable of striking American soil with a nuclear-armed missile. At the most, it can fire a few nuclear weapons at South Korea or Japan. The United States, of course, has more than 10,000 fully deliverable nuclear bombs. And yet North Korea's Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il, has been bellowing nuclear destruction at the United States. His country possesses, his spokesmen have said, a "powerful deterrent" that can turn South Korea—and the American bases in South Korea—into a "sea of fire" (a phrase the North Koreans seem almost to have copyrighted). Just recently, North Korea declared its promise to South Korea not to build nuclear arms "nullified"—owing to America's threats to destroy the regime.

Kim is well suited to the role of madman. This leader (with his accidentally fashionable spiky, two-inch-tall hair) of a regime that has starved millions of its people and is perhaps the most regimented on earth, does not have to strain to convince the world that he might be capable of irrational acts. And yet it's also true that those acts display—shades of Thomas Schelling—the "rationality of irrationality" more clearly than anyone has done before, since the United States has indeed been deterred (at least so far) by his threats.

Yet there is no need to go halfway around the world to find the resurrection of the madman theory. We only have to look at our own government. The Bush Administration has been puzzling again over the paradox that a threat is no good if it appears crazy to carry it out. Linton Brooks, the acting administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration, has said to the *New York Times*, "We need to make sure our weapons will in fact be seen by other countries as a deterrent. One element of that is usability. If nobody believes there is any circumstance where you will use the weapon, it is not a deterrent." Therefore the Administration has proposed that a legislative ban established in 1993 against low-yield nuclear weapons (less than five kilotons of explosive power) be rescinded, and the Senate Armed Services Committee, voting largely on party lines, has just concurred. The change is in keeping with a broader revival of nuclear threats by the Administration, which also revived the production of the plutonium pits that are at the core of nuclear bombs, which wants to shorten the time necessary to resume testing and which seeks funds to study a new nuclear weapon called the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator. (It's hard to know when this Administration is merely tone-deaf to the overtones of its jargon and when it is deliberately trying to provoke its opposition with outrageous nomenclature.)

However, the trouble, once again, is that if you establish usability, you may get use. And is the first use of nuclear weapons since Nagasaki what the United States now seeks? And can the United States succeed in persuading other nations not to acquire nuclear weapons when it insists not only on possessing them but on using them, and what is more, using them first? Carl Levin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, comments, "This just undermines our whole argument. We're driving recklessly down a road that we're telling other people not to walk down." And what if, as you cultivate your own new version of the madman theory, your adversary does the same, as Kim Jong Il now is doing? One madman leaves the hope that the adversary may be sane. Two could push us all into the sea of fire.

Jonathan Schell is the author of the just-published The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People *(Metropolitan).*

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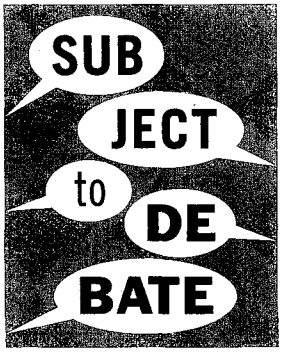
KATHA POLLITT

Bah, Humbug

I wish it had been sex, maybe some of that hot "man on dog" action that Senator Rick Santorum is so keen on chatting about. But let me not be picky. Since we are talking about that thundering sultan of sanctimony Bill Bennett, high-stakes gambling will do quite nicely. In eleven books, including the mega-selling *Book of Virtues*, a PBS cartoon series on morality for kids, countless speeches at $50,000 a pop, a slew of op-eds and more face time on TV than the man who squeezes the Charmin, Bennett has made himself our Cato, inveighing against everyone else's licentious, addicted, family-destroying ways. Abortion!, he growled. Drugs! Rap! Adultery! Homosexuality! Divorce! Single moms! The Simpsons! To the wall with you, feminists, gay priests and fornicating Democrats Bill Clinton, Jesse Jackson and Gary Condit! To prison, not rehab, any of you who've so much as looked hopefully at a nickel bag of weed! He's expatiated upon the joys of teenage shotgun marriages and the selfishness of having fewer than "six or seven" kids. (Bennett himself married at 38 and has two children—a hypocrisy tip-off right there, for those who were paying attention.)



Bashing moral laxity—and blaming it on liberals—was a popular and very profitable line of tripe that made Reagan's Education Secretary and Bush Sr.'s drug czar a millionaire many times over. Is it any wonder that honest sinners are rising as one to cheer now that *Newsweek* and *Washington Monthly* report that he plowed a staggering eight of those millions right back into the vice economy as fast as he could pull the handle of the $500 slot machines that were his favored mode of "relaxation"?

Bill Kristol, Jonah Goldberg and other conservatives maintain that Bennett has done nothing wrong. Gambling is, after all, legal, and Bennett says he never gambled "the milk money." Unfortunately, Bennett sandbagged his defenders by admitting that he had "done too much gambling" and vowing to quit. In any case, the legality defense won't wash. Except for drugs and, in some states, homosexuality and (nominally) adultery, most of the things Bennett inveighed against are legal. Complaining about that sorry fact was part of his shtick.

Bennett's point was never just that people ought to obey the law: Sure, drink yourself into a daily stupor, as long as you're not driving. No, *The Book of Virtues* evoked the old Aristotelian/Stoic/Christian/Early American civic values: piety, sobriety, temperance, honesty, prudence, self-control, setting an example. It's hard to imagine John Bunyan or George Washington giving Bennett a high five on his way to private rooms at various Las Vegas casinos, where he was such a loyal and lavish customer he was comped for limos, rooms and Lord knows what else.

Bennett's defense that his family didn't suffer may be true, or it may be denial, but it misses the point. As Michael Kinsley observes in the *Washington Post*, Bennett has always argued that being good is a form of noblesse oblige; even minor vices indulged in by the privilege-cushioned elite corrupt those lower down the social scale, who have less to fall back on. Let Muffy toke up on some hydro at Harvard, and before you know it Charlene is on crack in the projects. Let same-sex love flourish, and by some mysterious process, it will wreak havoc on heterosexual marriage.

But gambling is a perfect example of a trickle-down vice: A multimillionaire can afford to lose an amount that would send most Americans to the poorhouse. By his own lights, Bennett has failed the truckers, waitresses and retirees who, faced with continuous temptation and omnipresent opportunities to gamble, end up betting the Christmas money at Foxwoods or blowing the phone bill on the lotto.

"Pathological" or "problem" gambling is a serious social malady that, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling, affects some 6 million Americans. It destroys and impoverishes families and, like all obsessive behavior, makes practitioners and those who love them miserable. But don't take my word for it. Just ask the folks at Empower America, of which Bennett is chairman. Empower America opposes the expansion of legalized gambling and lists problem gambling as a leading indicator of America's cultural decline. In fact, widespread conservative disapproval of Bennett's open secret is part of why the story got leaked.

It's debatable whether decriminalizing marijuana would increase its use—and whether that would be so very awful. But there's no doubt that the widespread legalization of gambling, or "gaming" as the industry prefers we call it, has boosted it into the mainstream. Moreover, where you have gambling you also tend to find organized crime, prostitution, political corruption and the illusion of a budgetary free lunch—as when legislators use lottery profits or gambling taxes to substitute for regular funding of education. As a pseudolibertarian tax on the poor, gambling is the perfect Republican revenue stream. Even as I write, George Pataki is proposing to cure New York's budget woes by installing 4,500 video lottery terminals—anything but raise taxes on the wealthy!

Bennett's defenders make much of the fact that he never condemned gambling and so was not actually a hypocrite. Leaving your own pet vice off a long, long list of sins, and then, when you are found out, exempting that vice as practiced by you but not as practiced by others—that's not exculpation from charges of hypocrisy, that's what hypocrisy *is*.

If Bennett were a jolly, modest fellow, full of love for fallen humanity and the first to admit he was just another sinner like the rest of us—if he were less quick to impute the worst motives to perfectly ordinary behavior, like having two kids; if he spent less time promoting rigid, puritanical morals and more time promoting, oh, kindness and tolerance and looking into your own heart and cutting other people some slack because you never really know what demons they're contending with—no one would be piling on now.

But then, with a message like that, no one would have heard of him in the first place. You don't get to play Christian on TV, or amass real political power along with your millions, by urging people not to throw the first stone, especially if they live in a glass house. Jesus tried that, and look what happened to him. ■

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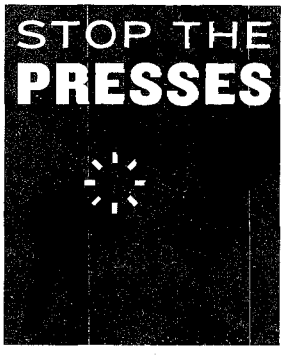
ERIC ALTERMAN

Who Framed John Fund?



So the right-wing journalist John Fund may not be a model citizen, but contrary to the implications of many left journalists and gossip columnists, he's likely not the kind of guy who pretends to want to marry women and then beats them up.

Sure, Sidney Blumenthal fingers Fund as the original source for the malicious rumor, published by Matt Drudge, alleging that Blumenthal had a history of spousal abuse. (Fund denies this.) And his record vis-à-vis the late Vince Foster and the entire nefarious "Arkansas Project" while working as a *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer brings him no honor, either as a journalist or a citizen. I'm sure a careful study of his work would fill a "how not to" book for journalism schools across the land.

Naturally, it was fun to imagine, after he got himself arrested last year, that Fund was really a monster who had walked out on a planned marriage with his girlfriend and then beat her up—the dastardly deeds of which he was publicly accused in 2001. Even better, to his ill-wishers, was the rumor that Fund had long ago had an affair with the woman's mother, and knocked up both of them.

Well, it's a fact of life in our scandal-besotted culture that it does not take much in the way of evidence to publish charges that can ruin a man's life. The charges against Fund appeared most prominently (and repeatedly) in Lloyd Grove's gossip column in the *Washington Post* and Richard Johnson's Page Six in the *New York Post*. They were trumpeted across the Internet on various leftist sites like *American Politics Journal*; by the controversialist John Connolly, who posted them on weaselsearch.com; and by *Village Voice* media reporter Cynthia Cotts, who reported on them twice and even escorted Fund's accuser to David Brock's Manhattan book party for *Blinded by the Right*, where Cotts introduced me to the woman in question, Morgan Francis Pillsbury.

Personally, I always thought the story was too good to be true. I discussed the accusations briefly, in this column and in my book *What Liberal Media? The Truth About Bias and the News*. In both places, I spoke of them as cautionary tales for conservative scandalmongers but added that I believed Fund's denials, absent any compelling evidence to the contrary. I knew Fund a bit from our time together at MSNBC, and as I said in both places, he always struck me as a perfect gentleman (for such a political scoundrel). And Pillsbury and her mother, as I also wrote at the time, both struck me as "a little bit nutty," to borrow Brock's nefarious phrase. But I admit I enjoyed it. Right-wing smear artists had abused the constitutional impeachment process and all but destroyed Bill Clinton's presidency for a lot less. Their scandal machine had now backfired on one of its own. I didn't want to play myself, but I didn't mind that others were eager and willing.

The details were pretty distasteful. Among Fund's crimes trumpeted by Cotts in the *Voice*, for instance, was poor housekeeping. His apartment, she reports, was full of "dirty dishes, unopened mail, and bottles of alcohol from hotel minibars"; the floor was "covered with piles of black socks and dirty underwear."

Pillsbury felt so betrayed by my calling her story into question earlier this year that she circulated an Internet attack against me for lacking the guts to call Fund to account. I wondered what the hell Fund had done to get involved with someone like this—and if he was completely innocent, why did he lose his high-profile gig at the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page and end up writing for its benighted little brother, opinionjournal.com?

Over the past few weeks, I've received a set of documents from a close friend of Fund's—now posted on the Internet—that demonstrate to almost any fair-minded person that Fund is probably the victim of a deeply disturbed person. In a signed affidavit, the woman in question—whose true age is 36, seven years older than was reported, and who was born Carolyn Anne Barteaux but carries a passport (a copy of which was provided to me by Fund) under the name Carolyn Anne Pillsbury and now goes by Morgan Francis Pillsbury—withdraws any accusations of physical abuse, accusations that resulted in Fund's arrest. She also denies in the affidavit that they had ever planned to marry.

In a letter to the *Wall Street Journal*, she acknowledges that she has "trouble distinguishing between reality and fantasy" and in a sworn deposition, she says she has a "borderline personality disorder. One of the symptoms of this condition is an inability to discriminate truth from fiction." In that same deposition, in response to the question, "What lies had you told in the past?" she answers, "Too many to name."

When I contacted Pillsbury by e-mail to ask her about these documents, she insisted that the two *had* planned to marry. She professed not to know that the assault charges against Fund had been dropped, claiming the DA has not been clear with her and that the case was "grossly mishandled." Regarding the signed affidavit, she now insists, "John battered me over and over, inflicting bruises and contusions. He then forced me to write and sign a paper denying this while he stood over me, fist at the ready." In her civil complaint against Fund, she charges him with "opprobrious, egregious, wanton, willful and oppressive" battery. (Fund has filed a counterclaim, and the two remain in litigation.)

I must admit, I did not find Pillsbury's story compelling when I first read the reports. Now, given her signed or sworn statements, I find it even less so, particularly after discussing the details with Fund, who admits to many gross misjudgments and mistakes with regard to his relationship with Pillsbury but continues to deny any abuse whatever. (I did not receive a response from Pillsbury's attorney.)

It's true, John Fund did live by the sword. But liberals and leftists must ask ourselves whether we really want to live by David Talbot's famous claim, made in the context of revealing a decades-old adulterous affair of Henry Hyde's, that "ugly times call for ugly tactics." When I asked Cotts by e-mail whether she had regrets about any of her coverage of the case, her only on-the-record reply was, "Eric, I have no comment for your article." Before I had

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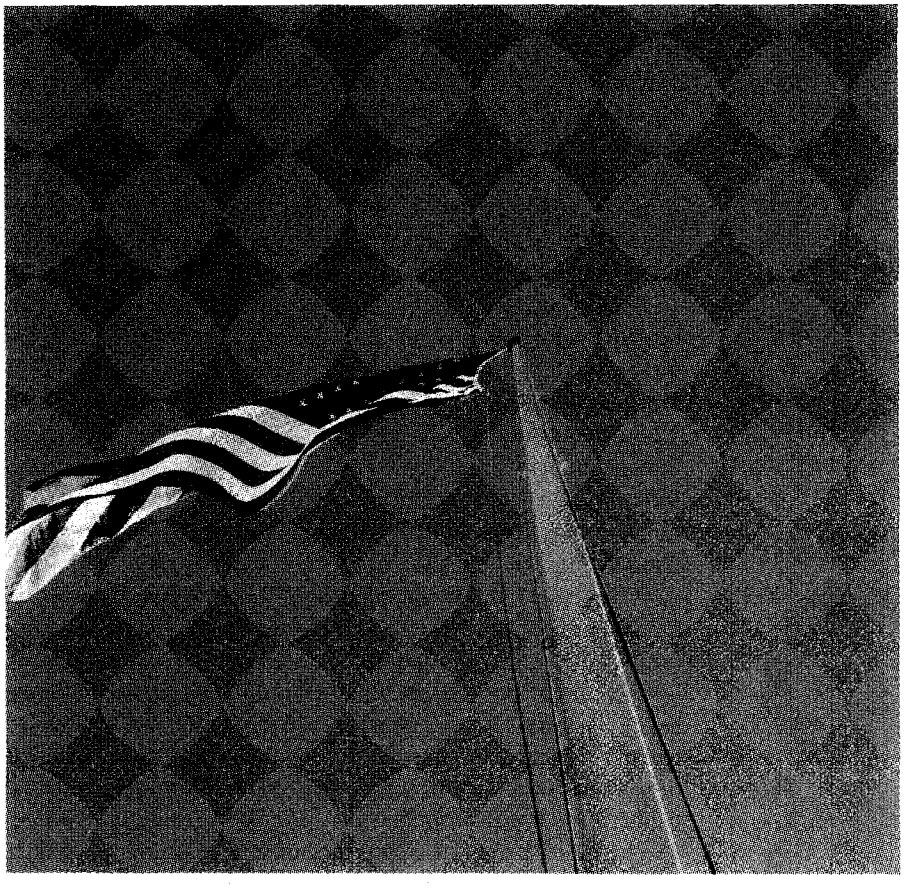
ARTICLES

WE ARE THE PATRIOTS

by GORE VIDAL



I belong to a minority that is now one of the smallest in the country and, with every day, grows smaller. I am a veteran of World War II. And I can recall thinking, when I got out of the Army in 1946, Well, that's that. We won. And those who come after us will never need do this again. Then came the two mad wars of imperial vanity—Korea and Vietnam. They were bitter for us, not to mention for the so-called enemy. Next we were enrolled in a perpetual war against what seemed to be the enemy-of-the-month club. This war kept major revenues going to military procurement and secret police, while withholding money from us, the taxpayers, with our petty concerns for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

But no matter how corrupt our system became over the last century—and I lived through three-quarters of it—we still held on to the Constitution and, above all, to the Bill of Rights. No matter how bad things got, I never once believed that I would see a great part of the nation—of we the people, unconsulted and unrepresented in a matter of war and peace—demonstrating in such numbers against an arbitrary and secret government, preparing and conducting wars for us, or at least for an army recruited from the unemployed to fight in. Sensibly, they now leave much of the fighting to the uneducated, to the excluded.

During Vietnam Bush fled to the Texas Air National Guard. Cheney, when asked why he avoided service in Vietnam, replied, "I had other priorities." Well, so did 12 million of us sixty years ago. Priorities that 290,000 were never able to fulfill.

So who's to blame? Us? Them? Well, we can safely blame certain oil and gas hustlers who have effectively hijacked the government from presidency to Congress to, most ominously, the judiciary. How did they do it? Curiously, the means have always been there. It took the higher greed and other interests to make this coup d'état work.

It was Benjamin Franklin, of all people, who saw our future most clearly back in 1787, when, as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia, he read for the first time the proposed Constitution. He was old; he was dying; he was not well enough to speak but he had prepared a text that a friend read. It is so dark a statement that most school history books omit his key words.

Franklin urged the convention to accept the Constitution despite what he took to be its great faults, because it might, he said, provide good government in the short term. "There is no form of government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered, and I believe farther that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in Despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic Government, being incapable of any other." Think of Enron, Merrill Lynch, etc., of chads and butterfly ballots, of Scalia's son arguing before his unrecused father at the Supreme Court while unrecused Thomas sits silently

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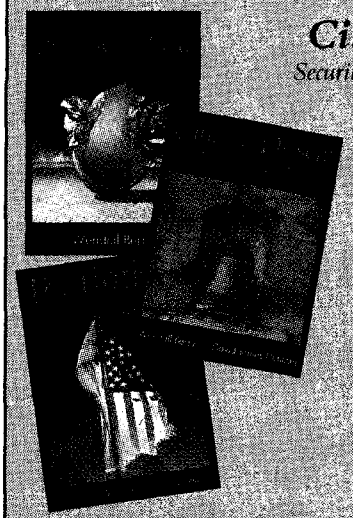

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by, his wife already at work for the approaching Bush Administration. Think, finally, of the electoral college, a piece of dubious, antidemocratic machinery that Franklin doubtless saw as a source of deepest corruption and subsequent mischief for the Republic, as happened not only in 1876 but in 2000.

Franklin's prophecy came true in December 2000, when the Supreme Court bulldozed its way through the Constitution in order to select as its President the loser in the election of that year. Despotism is now securely in the saddle. The old Republic is a shadow of itself, and we now stand in the glare of a nuclear world empire with a government that sees as its true enemy "we the people," *deprived* of our electoral franchise. War is the usual aim of despots, and serial warfare is what we are going to get unless—with help from well-wishers in new old Europe and from ourselves, awake at last—we can persuade this peculiar Administration that they are acting entirely on their vicious own, and against all *our* history.

The other night on CNN I brought the admirable Aaron Brown to a full stop, not, this time, with Franklin but with John Quincy Adams, who said in 1821, on the subject of our fighting to liberate Greece from Turkey, the United States "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy." If the United States took up all foreign affairs, "she might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit," her own soul.

Should we be allowed in 2004 to hold a presidential election here in the homeland, I suspect we shall realize that the only regime change that need concern our regained spirit—or soul—is in Washington.

President Adams is long since dead. And we have now been in the empire business since 1898: We had promised to give the Filipinos their independence from Spain. Then we changed our mind, killing some 200,000 of them in the process of Americanizing them.

A few years ago there was a significant exchange between then-General Colin Powell and then-statesperson Madeleine Albright. Like so many civilians, she was eager to use our troops against our enemies: What's the point of having all this military and not using it? He said, They are not toy soldiers. But in the interest of fighting Communism for so long, we did spend trillions of dollars, until we are now in danger of sinking beneath the weight of so much weaponry.

Therefore, I suppose it was inevitable that, sooner or later, a new generation would get the bright idea, Why not stop fooling around with diplomacy and treaties and coalitions and just use our military power to give orders to the rest of the world? A year or two ago, a pair of neoconservatives put forward this exact notion. I responded—in print—that if we did so, we would have perpetual war for perpetual peace. Which is not good for business. Then the Cheney-Bush junta seized power. Although primarily interested in oil reserves, they liked the idea of playing soldiers too.

Last September Congress received from the Administration a document called the National Security Strategy of the United States. As the historian Joseph Stromberg observed, "It must be read to be believed." The doctrine preaches the desirability of the United States becoming—to use Adams's words—dictatress of

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Gore Vidal's latest book is Dreaming War: Blood for Oil and the Cheney-Bush Junta *(Thunder's Mouth).*

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the world. It also assumes that the President and his lieutenants are morally entitled to govern the planet. It declares that our "best defense is a good offense." The doctrine of pre-emption is next declared: "As a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats *before* they are fully formed." (Emphasis added.) Doubtless, General Ashcroft is now in Utah arresting every Mormon male before he can kidnap eight young girls for potential wives.

Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution says that only Congress can declare war. But Congress surrendered that great power to the President in 1950 and has never taken it back.

As former Senator Alan Simpson said so cheerily on TV the other evening, "The Commander in Chief of the military will decide what the cause is. It won't be the American people." So in great matters we are not guided by law but by faith in the President, whose powerful Christian beliefs preach that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

In response to things not seen, the USA Patriot Act was rushed through Congress and signed forty-five days after 9/11. We are expected to believe that its carefully crafted 342 pages were written in that short time. Actually, it reads like a continuation of Clinton's post–Oklahoma City antiterrorist act. The Patriot Act makes it possible for government agents to break into anyone's home when they are away, conduct a search and keep the citizen indefinitely from finding out that a warrant was issued. They can oblige librarians to tell them what books anyone has withdrawn. If the librarian refuses, he or she can be criminally charged. They can also collect your credit reports and other sensitive information without judicial approval or the citizen's consent.

Finally, all this unconstitutional activity need not have the

Dare Call It Treason

Few traditions are more American than freedom of speech and the right to dissent. But an equally powerful American tradition has been the effort by government and private "patriots" to suppress free expression in times of crisis. During the fighting in Iraq, former military leaders who criticized planning for the war were denounced for endangering troops in the field and warned to remain silent. A number of scholars, including myself, were branded "Traitor Professors" on a television talk show. If criticism of a war while it is in progress makes one a traitor, that category will have to include Abraham Lincoln, who denounced the Mexican War while serving in Congress in 1847; Mark Twain, who vehemently attacked government policy in the Spanish-American and Philippine wars at the turn of the last century; and Martin Luther King Jr., who eloquently called for an end to the war in Vietnam.

With the exception of World War II, every significant war in American history has inspired vigorous dissent. Many colonists remained loyal to Britain during the American Revolution. Most New Englanders opposed the War of 1812. Numerous Americans considered the Mexican War an effort to extend the territory of slavery. Both North and South were internally divided during the Civil War. World War I and Vietnam produced massive antiwar movements. This is part of our democratic tradition.

Equally persistent, however, have been efforts to suppress wartime dissent. The Alien and Sedition Acts during the "quasi-war" with France in 1798 allowed the President to deport aliens and made it illegal to criticize the government. Both Union and Confederate governments suppressed opposition newspapers and jailed critics. World War I witnessed a massive repression of freedom of speech, with critics of the war, socialists and labor leaders jailed or deported, those suspected of disloyalty rounded up by private vigilantes and the speaking of German banned in some places. Universities, including my own, fired professors who opposed American involvement.

Self-proclaimed patriots not only seek to determine the boundaries of acceptable speech about the present but rewrite history to create a more politically useful past. During World War I, the Committee on Public Information, a government propaganda agency, published pamphlets demonstrating the "common principles" of Oliver Cromwell, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Jefferson in order to create a historical lineage for the Anglo-French-American military alliance. Today, statements about history that in normal times would seem uncontroversial have been labeled treasonous. Daniel Pipes said in his syndicated newspaper column that I "hate America" because I noted that Japan invoked the idea of pre-emptive war to justify its attack on Pearl Harbor (a point also made by that well-known anti-American, Arthur Schlesinger Jr.). My comment to a reporter that the United States has frequently embarked on military ventures without being attacked, as in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, prompted accusations of treason in the media.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, a far greater crisis than the war on Iraq, the Supreme Court in the *Milligan* case invalidated the use of military tribunals to try civilians. The Court proclaimed that the Constitution is not suspended in wartime: "It is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and in peace." Alas, we have not always lived up to this ideal. The history of civil liberties in the United States is not a straight-line trajectory toward ever-greater freedom. It is a complex story in which victories can prove temporary and regression can follow progress.

Our civil liberties are neither self-enforcing nor self-correcting. Historians today view past suppressions of free speech as shameful episodes. But we are now living through another moment when many commentators, both in and out of government, seem to view freedom of expression as at best an inconvenience and at worst unpatriotic. The incessant attacks on dissenters as traitors are intended to create an atmosphere of shock and awe within the United States, so that those tempted to speak their mind become too intimidated to do so.

George W. Bush has claimed that America's enemies wish to destroy our freedoms. If we surrender freedom of speech in the hope that this will bring swifter victory on current and future battlefields, who then will have won the war? ERIC FONER

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slightest connection with terrorism. Early in February, the Justice Department leaked Patriot Act II, known as the Domestic Security Enhancement Act, dated January 9, 2003. A Congress that did not properly debate the first act will doubtless be steamrolled by this lawless expansion.

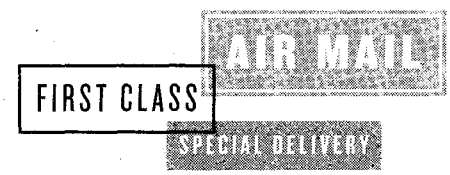
Some provisions: If an American citizen has been accused of supporting an organization labeled as terrorist by the government, he can be deprived of his citizenship even if he had no idea the organization had a link to terrorists. Provision in Act II is also made for more searches and wiretaps without warrant as well as secret arrests (Section 201). In case a citizen tries to fight back in order to retain the citizenship he or she was born with, those federal agents who conduct illegal surveillance with the blessing of high Administration officials are immune from legal action. A native-born American deprived of citizenship would, presumably, be deported, just as, today, a foreign-born person can be deported. Also, according to a recent ruling of a federal court, this new power of the Attorney General is not susceptible to judicial review. Since the American who has had his citizenship taken away cannot, of course, get a passport, the thoughtful devisers of Domestic Security Enhancement authorize the Attorney General to deport him "to any country or region regardless of whether the country or region has a government." Difficult cases with no possible place to go can be held indefinitely.

Where under Patriot Act I only foreigners were denied due process of law as well as subject to arbitrary deportation, Patriot Act II now includes American citizens in the same category, thus eliminating in one great erasure the Bill of Rights.

Our greatest historian, Charles Beard, wrote in 1939:

> The destiny of Europe and Asia has not been committed, under God, to the keeping of the United States; and only conceit, dreams of grandeur, vain imaginings, lust for power, or a desire to escape from our domestic perils and obligations could possibly make us suppose that Providence has appointed us his chosen people for the pacification of the earth.
>
> Those Americans who refuse to plunge blindly into the maelstrom of European and Asiatic politics are not defeatist or neurotic. They are giving evidence of sanity, not cowardice, of adult thinking as distinguished from infantilism. *They* intend to preserve and defend the Republic. America is not to be Rome or Britain. It is to be America. ■

Letter From Baghdad



by Steve Negus

The children came out to cheer, and the adults waved from their doorways, as Staff Sgt. Jason Pond of the 101st Airborne Division led a patrol of infantry through the northern Baghdad district of Kasra. "They [the Iraqis] are friendly to us, and we're friendly back. They come to us with their problems, and we try to fix them," Sergeant Pond said about his work. Teenagers approached his patrol to report looting at a nearby government office, parents asked him where they might treat a son suffering from an accidental gunshot wound, residents of a middle-class neighborhood complained of squatters who had moved into an abandoned youth center. In some cases, there was little that Sergeant Pond's patrol could do, but the residents appeared happy that at least one outside authority had taken an interest in their well-being.

Revisiting the same streets the next day, I listened to an outpouring of grievances—not about the US troops, whom residents consistently described as "very polite," but about life in postwar Baghdad, where there's one hour of power all night, where salaries are unpaid, where gangs hijack cars at night on the roads and where gas is in such short supply that frustrated drivers pull pistols on each other at service stations. "It is very difficult without a government, very difficult," said schoolteacher Hamid Jassem. Another resident, who identified himself only as an oil-sector employee, was more militant: "America came here saying they wanted to help the Iraqi people, and we helped them defeat Saddam Hussein.... Well, we're going to organize popular resistance against the Americans, like the Palestinian intifada, if they don't give us some help."

Nearly a month after Saddam Hussein's statue came down in Firdous Square, an event that has come to mark the collapse of the old order, Iraqis offer very mixed reviews of the US invasion. The swift melting away of Baathist resistance in Iraq's capital has made it unnecessary for the United States to maintain the kind of tight security measures that make life under other military occupations so onerous. Moreover, US soldiers and Marines appear to honestly believe themselves liberators. I have yet to see any of the humiliations inflicted on the occupied that are part of life in the Palestinian territories.

For some, the fall of Saddam fully justifies the uncertainties of the present. One old Communist whom I met in the Shiite holy city of Karbala wished to deliver a personal message of thanks to George W. Bush for "ridding us of that tyrant Saddam." He was missing two fingers from his right hand, cut off during Saddam's crackdown on the party in the 1970s. More common than gratitude is ambivalence. Tha'er Abdel Kader, a computer specialist, turned to me with delight when, driving through one of Baghdad's commercial districts, he first laid eyes on an item that a month ago would have earned its owner a stretch in prison: "A satellite dish! That's freedom." Yet for Abdel Kader, as for many of his compatriots, it's an article of faith that the United States invaded Iraq for the oil. He respects

Steve Negus is a Cairo-based journalist writing on Egyptian and Middle Eastern affairs.

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A CALL TO BRING THE SETTLERS HOME TO ISRAEL

We are American Jews who care deeply about Israel and who are filled with sorrow by the continuous cycle of violence and death in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We call upon the United States government to embrace an initiative which can break through the present stalemate, create a new opening for a negotiated settlement, safeguard the lives of Israeli settlers and remove a major obstacle to peace.

We call upon the United States government:

- to urge the Israeli Government to reverse its longstanding financial induce-ments to Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and instead to redirect those funds to settlers who are now willing to return to Israel proper;
- to provide generous foreign assistance and to solicit contributions from the European Union, other major industrial democracies and the United Nations for this massive relocation effort, irrespective of whether the Israeli government is ready to participate.

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✸

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✸ *David Ben-Gurion, Yihud ve-Yi'ud (Tel Aviv) 1971 p. 294*

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the work of the military but worries about what will happen when fast-living contractors begin to replace the hard-living soldiers as the most visible US presence on the ground: "When we see the Americans going around in big cars and eating in the expensive restaurants while we are going hungry, our feelings will change."

There are parts of Iraq where the United States is simply not welcome. In a brief visit to the town of Falluja, just west of Baghdad, I saw banners hanging across the main street warning US forces to withdraw or be killed. An Apache helicopter hovered overhead, as the US garrison watched from behind a double row of concertina wire. Several days before, protesters had marched on a US-occupied school; the soldiers, claiming they'd heard shots from the crowd, opened fire, and sixteen were killed. Today, a colleague of mine who stopped to pray in the local mosque was told by worshipers that they are preparing a jihad to drive the occupants from their midst.

Falluja is an exceptional case. Part of the old regime's Sunni support base, its citizens extol the Saddam years as a time of plenty. Asked what set off the original demonstrations, residents spoke of US soldiers using night-vision equipment to peer into people's homes, or the annoying buzz of helicopters overhead—not the kind of grievance, one would imagine, that would lead to conflict had Falluja been well disposed to the invaders from the beginning.

'At the beginning we were optimistic about the Americans, but they have failed us.'
—Baghdad resident Hayat Abbas

Baghdad's northeastern slums, unlike Falluja, are about as hostile to Baathism as one can get. This sprawl of cinderblock houses and open sewers, formerly Saddam City, has renamed itself Al Sadr City after a Shiite cleric executed by the regime. Saddam brutally repressed the public mourning rituals that are the emotional center of Iraqi Shiism—not least because the rituals commemorate the martyrdom of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson Hussein, whose rebellion against an unjust ruler lent itself a little too easily to contemporary politics.

I spoke to 52-year-old Hayat Abbas as she drew her water from a pump newly restored to operation by volunteers for the local mosques. "At the beginning we were optimistic about the Americans, but they have failed us," she said. "We have freedom to worship, to mourn Hussein, but we have no government services." To slum dwellers, the absence of services can be fatal: During the war, two of Abbas's grandchildren drank contaminated water, began vomiting and died.

Al Sadr City's poverty left its inhabitants particularly vulnerable to the disruptions of war. According to local aid workers, families in slums have not been able to supplement the government's meager food ration with meat and vegetables, leaving their children malnourished and vulnerable to infection. In central Baghdad, a backup pump system kept water flowing at least intermittently throughout the war; here in the periphery, the pipes ran dry and inhabitants were forced to drink either contaminated groundwater from makeshift wells or to scavenge from irrigation ditches and stagnant ponds.

Like Abbas, many inhabitants of the northeastern slums have come to depend on the Shiite clergy—often collectively referred to as Al Hawza Al Ilmiya, after the council of senior scholars based in the southern city of Najaf—for the necessities of life. The Hawza is the de facto government in Al Sadr City and many other parts of Baghdad. Volunteers who pledge their allegiance to the Hawza direct traffic, distribute food and patrol the neighborhood against the armed gangs that are still the terror of Baghdad. Bearded men with Kalashnikovs, indicating Hawza protection, can be found in warehouses, orphanages, the reception areas of hospitals and other public institutions throughout the city. Doctors, aid workers and others at these institutions frequently complain of clerical excesses—medicines seized for mosque projects, outside help refused lest it undermine the Hawza's authority or female workers required to wear the veil—but few appear willing to challenge them.

For the most part, US military authorities in Iraq have avoided confrontation with the Hawza. The Hawza, however, appears to believe itself to be in confrontation with the United States. The clerics claim, with some justification, that they have not been given a role in the making of Iraq's new political order commensurate with their status as the most prominent representatives of the 60 percent of the population that is Shiite.

It is easy for the more militant clerics to milk the current state of anarchy in Iraq for political capital. Kut, a Shiite town to the east of Baghdad, is one of the few areas where there has been direct conflict between the local clergy and the US military authorities. Here, a local cleric and businessman occupied the provincial government building before being ordered out under threat of arrest. His supporters told me that US forces deliberately encouraged the looting and arson that followed the fall of the Baath—they wanted to create as many rebuilding contracts for US companies as possible. As for Saddam, he was clearly an American agent—how else could the coalition have overrun the entire country in three weeks?

Such conspiracy theories are common enough in radical Islamist discourse, but even those who are distrustful of clerical authority worry about Washington's evident lack of concern about restoring order. Kasra resident Suheil Sabri, himself a Shiite, fears that the senior clerics' push for power will plunge the country into factional warfare. This, he claims, may have been the US intention all along. "After thirty years of suffering from Saddam, Iraqis merely want peace," he said. "Maybe the United States doesn't want [peace]. Maybe the United States is satisfied with the current situation so that there is fighting inside Iraq, so they can see who is the strongest, and then weaken him."

Iraqis' fear of exploitation runs deep. It could hardly be otherwise in a country where outside powers have first backed, then overthrown, a brutal dictatorship; which sits on a tenth of the world's oil resources but which suffers from grinding poverty. The overall failure of the United States to either anticipate or provide for the country's postwar needs has deepened Iraqi distrust of American intentions. The Bush Administration may claim that it has engineered the liberation of Iraq, but it has yet to convince the Iraqis. ■

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ARREST FOR ANTIBUSH PROTESTERS, DEATH THREATS FOR ANTIWAR PROFESSORS, SUSPENSION FOR STUDENTS WHO DON'T SAY THE PLEDGE: IS THIS THE NEW McCARTHYISM?

SERIOUSLY, MAN. WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?
5/8
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The Big Chill

ALISA SOLOMON

At a lecture in Cleveland in March, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia told the audience, "Most of the rights that you enjoy go way beyond what the Constitution requires." The government can legitimately scale back individual rights during wartime, he explained, since "the Constitution just sets minimums." For an increasing number of Americans, it seems, even such minimums are excessive. Last August, the Freedom Forum's annual First Amendment survey showed that 49 percent of those polled said the Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees, a ten-point jump since the last survey, conducted just before 9/11. In the wake of the recent war and the triumphalism that has followed, it's a fair guess that in this summer's survey, the numbers will climb even higher.

While we've seen a flood of antiwar activity over the past eight months, we've also witnessed a powerful countercurrent of political repression. From shopping malls to cyberspace, Hollywood to the Ivy League, Americans have taken it upon themselves to stifle and shame those who question the legitimacy of the Administration or the war on Iraq. When we read a story here or there about the arrest of a man wearing a "Peace on Earth" T-shirt in an upstate New York mall, or about country music fans crushing Dixie Chicks CDs because the lead singer said she was ashamed of the President, each may seem like an anomalous episode. But taken as a whole, the far-flung incidents of bullying, silencing and even threats of violence reveal a political and cultural shift that recalls some of America's darkest days.

Like any avalanche, this one started at the top, and likely dates back to the moment after 9/11 when President Bush warned the world's nations, "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." From Bush on down, in the months that followed, government officials drew limits around acceptable speech. White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer told Americans to "watch what they say." Such words gained force when the Patriot Act gave the government extensive new powers to spy, interrogate and detain. When civil libertarians began to protest the curbing of constitutional rights, Attorney General John Ashcroft offered a forbidding rejoinder: "To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: Your tactics only aid terrorists." These kinds of remarks from our government's top leaders, says Anthony Romero, executive director of the ACLU, have granted ordinary people license "to shut down alternative views." The Administration has fashioned a domestic arm of its new doctrine of pre-emption.

Rashes of American conformity and nativism have broken out before during periods of war, social strain and insecurity over national self-definition. During World War I, the McCarthy period and the COINTELPRO program of three decades ago, dissenters lost their jobs, went to jail and endured mob violence or government smears. Today's crackdowns do not match the force and scale of those shameful times, or take the same forms. History rarely repeats precisely those excesses, which have since been declared dishonorable or unconstitutional. Though Phil Donahue was recently fired for his views, and charities have been canceling events with antiwar celebrities such as Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins, the Hollywood blacklist itself, says historian Howard Zinn, could not happen again. Still, while the government expands its power even as it loosens constitutional limitations on it, the public acquiescence—and participation—in suppression threatens American democracy anew.

Henry Foner, a longtime labor organizer who lost his state teaching license to the Red Scare, remembers the "tremendous terror" he felt in the McCarthy period, as "FBI agents were all over the place, visiting people's neighbors." Now, that fear is being

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experienced by Muslim and Arab immigrants, who are regarded as dangerous regardless of their political beliefs. Immigrant neighborhoods like Midwood, Brooklyn, home to more than 100,000 Pakistanis, have been decimated by the loss of thousands of men who were deported or who have fled. Many still languish in detention for minor visa violations or for donations to the wrong charity. Businesses have failed as customers have been afraid to venture out even to buy their groceries.

But if Arab and Muslim immigrants are enduring fear levels reminiscent of the McCarthy period, dissenters are experiencing a chill, according to historian Blanche Wiesen Cook, "more along the lines of the total repression during World War I, though we're not all the way there yet." The government has not revived, precisely, the Espionage Act of 1917, which barred from the mails any material (including this magazine) "advocating or urging treason, insurrection, or forcible resistance to any law of the United States"; or the Sedition Act of 1918, which outlawed virtually all criticism of the war and the government. Under that law, a man was sentenced to twenty years for stating in a private conversation that he hoped the "government goes to hell so it will be of no value." Today's clampdown, though far less systematic, is reminiscent: In February a former public defender, Andrew O'Conner, was arrested in Santa Fe for "threatening the president" and subjected to five hours of interrogation by special agents because he'd said, in an Internet chat room, "Bush is out of control." Glenda Gilmore, a professor of US history at Yale, sees significant parallels with that period, especially in the "nationalist hysteria that was in the streets and in the air." Egged on by government leaders warning of the presence of German spies and "seditious" antiwar labor activists, Americans joined mob actions to contain and castigate dissenters. Though not as widespread or as violent, patriotic vigilantism has broken out again across the nation. As before, it is often spontaneous, threatening and out of proportion to the action it means to challenge.

A historian sees parallels with the World War I era, especially in the 'nationalist hysteria that was in the streets and in the air.'

The New Patriotism

During the First World War, a man was beaten by fellow baseball fans for failing to stand up for "The Star-Spangled Banner." Today's patriotic outbursts are less bloody, though just as emotionally intense. Last winter, hundreds of merchant marine cadets amassed at a Manhattanville College basketball game to chant "Leave our country!" at senior Toni Smith, who had quietly been turning her back during the national anthem all season. Practically every sports columnist and talk-radio host in the country made sure to get in his licks against the obscure Division III player.

At Wheaton College, a small liberal arts school in Norton, Massachusetts, seven housemates hung an upside-down "distress" flag on their campus house the day the war started. Their neighbors responded by throwing rocks through the students' windows, calling in death threats to their answering machine and strapping a dead fish to their front door, *Godfather*-style. Restaurants in town stopped serving kids from Wheaton, and bar patrons harassed them. Norton police recommended that for their own safety, the housemates move out for a few days. "I know it's nothing like Baghdad or Palestine," says Geoffrey Bickford, a recent political science graduate and resident of the house. "But being forced to flee from my home, having my voice silenced and living in fear because of my beliefs—that concept is so frightening."

At Yale, when sophomore Katherine Lo also hung an upside-down flag out her window, several men wielding a 2 by 4 tried to enter her room late at night while Lo was home. They left a convoluted note on her door that ended, "Fuck Iraqi Saddam following fucks. I hate you, GO AMERICA."

In the swanky Detroit suburb of Birmingham, Shelli Weissberg recalls sitting down to lunch at a cafe with her 8-year-old daughter and one of the child's friends, when a man she'd never met stomped up and yelled at her for wearing a "No War" button in front of children. The Rev. Joseph Matoush, who led peace vigils in the military town of Twentynine Palms, California, found a letter tacked to his church door with caricatures of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden next to the lines, "These are your friends! Why don't you leave America now."

In Albuquerque, humanities teacher Bill Nevins was suspended because, he told the local press, poetry students he coaches wrote and recited anti-Bush verses at a local slam. (School officials say it's because he failed to supervise the kids correctly.)

ACLU affiliates around the country report cases of students being punished for expressing antiwar views. In Louisville, Kentucky, Sarah Doyle and her two older brothers, inspired by ballplayer Toni Smith, decided to protest the war by staying seated through the daily Pledge of Allegiance. Doyle's seventh-grade teacher made her come up to the front of the room and recite the pledge twice; one of her brothers received in-school suspension. Bretton Barber, 16, was sent home from Dearborn High School in Michigan when he refused to remove a T-shirt labeling George Bush an international terrorist. "I thought it was obvious the T-shirt was protected speech," says Barber, who filed suit against Dearborn High in March. He says he hopes to "send the message that all high school students have the right to express themselves."

But as the social costs increase, how many people will make use of such rights? Tim Robbins told the National Press Club on April 15 that on a recent trip to Florida for an extended family reunion, "the most frightening thing...was the amount of times we were thanked for speaking out against the war.... 'Keep talking,' they said. 'I haven't been able to open my mouth.'"

A hush has even come over the arts, where free expression is supposed to be paramount. San Francisco's Alliance Française, a French language and cultural center, removed a sculpture that poked fun at the Bush Administration from its February exhibition. The Palestinian-American comedian Maysoon Zayid reports that clubs she plays regularly have taken to declaring certain material beyond the pale: No more jokes, for instance, about Ariel Sharon bragging to Saddam Hussein about the Security Council resolutions he's violated. In a joint act of self-censorship, New York's most established Off Broadway theater companies declined to participate in an April day of action called by the downtown

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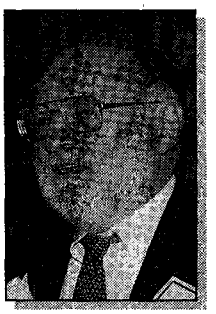
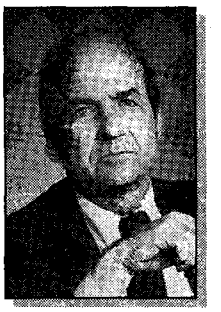


Victor Navasky
Publisher and Editorial Director, *The Nation*

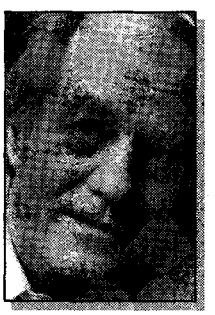
Katrina vanden Heuvel
Editor, *The Nation*



Calvin Trillin
Bestselling Author and *The Nation*'s "Deadline Poet"

Katha Pollitt
"Subject to Debate" Columnist

Eric Alterman
"Stop the Presses" Columnist



Jonathan Schell
Author of *Fate of the Earth* and *Nation* Disarmament Correspondent

Frank McCourt
Pulitzer Prize winning Author of *Angela's Ashes* and *'Tis: A Memoir*

Patricia J. Williams
"Diary of a Mad Law Professor" Columnist

Amos Elon
Veteran Israeli Journalist, Historian and Author of *The Pity of It All*

Molly Ivins
Political Satirist and *Nation* Contributing Editor

Date	Day	Ports of Call	Arrive	Depart
Dec. 6	Sat	Tampa, Florida		5:00PM
Dec. 7	Sun	Key West, Florida	11:30AM	6:00PM
Dec. 8	Mon	Day at Sea		
Dec. 9	Tue	Belize Ciy, Belize	8:00 AM	6:00 PM
Dec. 10	Wed	Santo Tomas de Castilla, Guatemala	6:00 AM	6:00 PM
Dec. 11	Thu	Cozumel, Mexico	1:00 PM	11:30 PM
Dec. 12	Fri	Day at Sea		
Dec. 13	Sat	Tampa, Florida	8:00 AM	

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group Theaters Against War. According to Mark Russell, executive director of the experimental performance space P.S. 122, people inside the National Endowment for the Arts have let it be known that "we shouldn't even bother to apply this year unless we have a really safe project."

This self-censorship extends all the way up to the halls of Congress, where Democrats have assured the President, in the words of Tom Lantos, the ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, of "solid, unanimous support" in the war on terrorism. This silence on the part of the official oppo-

The New Campus Raids

On February 26 the small town of Moscow, Idaho, saw more commotion than it had since a truck camper exploded in a vacant lot last September. While the town was still sleeping, two military planes landed at a nearby airport, and at 4:30 AM, at least 100 armed federal agents raided a University of Idaho student apartment—all to arrest a single Saudi graduate student, Sami al-Hussayyen. As dawn broke, they interrogated at least twenty other Middle Eastern students and their spouses in their homes, sometimes in front of their children. Within hours, the Feds indicted al-Hussayyen on felony charges of visa fraud, accusing him of supporting a Detroit-based Muslim charity that, they alleged, had links to overseas terrorists. (The group has not been formally charged.)

Word of the raid spread quickly among foreign students across the country, as did news in December that six Middle Easterners studying in Colorado were jailed when they complied with the INS's "special registration" program, required of men from twenty-five predominantly Muslim countries. Their offense: dropping below the twelve-hour course minimum required for a student visa, even though they had permission from their schools. Another round of "enforcement action," to use agency parlance, had apparently begun.

Thanks to Hani Hanjour, the 9/11 hijacker who entered the United States on a student visa, South Asian and Middle Eastern students joined the government's suspect list soon after the attacks. Since then, says the ACLU's Lucas Guttentag, attorneys have observed "a persistent pattern of discriminatory investigations and enforcement against Muslims and South Asians, especially foreign students from Middle Eastern countries." An untold number disappeared in the mass INS sweeps immediately after 9/11. Then came the "special registration" arrests, which included many students. And round three has just begun: The Homeland Security Department's new immigration enforcement agency, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), introduced a massive database in January that will soon track the country's 1.2 million foreign students and visiting scholars in real time.

Some of the tactics used with students are constitutionally questionable. In the Idaho raids, for example, combined teams of FBI and INS agents interrogated students, blurring the line between criminal and civil questioning. Under immigration law, foreign students must answer any question relating to their visa status, yet anyone questioned by the FBI—even a noncitizen—has the right to remain silent. UI law professor Elizabeth Brandt, who coordinated the students' legal representation, said the FBI was "bootstrapping" INS authority to pressure students to answer questions related to criminal activity.

Indeed, a Moscow attorney present at one interrogation described "threats of criminal prosecution, threats of being placed in deportation proceedings, threats of immediate arrest." The lawyer, who asked not to be named, said many of those interrogated were not given Miranda warnings, and at least one was refused when she asked to call a lawyer. The attorney said veteran defense lawyers present at the interrogations were "really shaken."

Justice Department spokesman Jorge Martinez would not comment on the Idaho raid except to say, "The FBI has clear guidance on how to handle those issues, Miranda rights." On April 25 al-Hussayyen was ordered deported for visa fraud, and ICE is holding him in solitary confinement as he awaits a criminal trial.

Since the Idaho and Colorado incidents, there has been a lull in the flashy raids. But foreign students are still on edge, as listservs carry whispers from campus to campus of interrogations, deportations and disappeared students.

Muslim foreign students say the pressure of continual scrutiny has led them to curtail travel plans and political activities. For some, this has meant agonizing professional sacrifices. Berkeley sophomore Imad Ahmed may turn down an internship with his "idol," an internationally esteemed human rights lawyer in Lahore. Although Ahmed is a British citizen and left Pakistan as an infant, he had to register with the INS and worries that he might have trouble re-entering the United States if he leaves.

Others are simply looking for a way out, believing the climate will only get worse. "I've had many friends leave," says Sharmeen Obaid, a Pakistani graduate student at Stanford University. "One quit a bank job in New York. The rest were in the process of applying for jobs but decided to go back."

Those who remain will likely see another wave of roundups after August 1, the compliance deadline for colleges to put information on all foreign students into the new ICE database. Once it's up and running, students will have to be vigilant about filing paperwork and keep schools notified of their every move, as the system's real-time reporting eliminates any slack that once allowed students and administrators to correct mistakes.

Immigration authorities have already picked up at least two students in good standing because of errors in the glitch-prone system. To this, ICE spokesman Chris Bentley responds, "Are these procedures foolproof? Obviously the answer is no. Could someone be arrested if the database says he is out of status? Yes."

In New York City, a Bangladeshi community-college student lives a life in limbo as he awaits deportation for a minor visa violation. Coming to America "was the best opportunity of my life," he said. "But after the buildings fell, I knew this would come. The worst has happened." JUNGWON KIM

Jungwon Kim is a radio reporter and an editor for Amnesty Now.

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sition party serves as a restraining factor, too: Notes political historian Gerald Horne, "Americans say to themselves, 'If people with money and power and influence are trimming their sails, why should little old me step forward?'"

A Culture of Fear

The September 11 terrorist attacks go a long way toward explaining why so much of the public has shivered quietly under this chill. "The fear in this country since 9/11," says Henry Foner, "is probably more intense than the fear of Communism in the 1950s."Already a nation primed to panic, thanks to sensational broadcast news and the Willie Horton tradition in political campaigns, a real attack on American soil profoundly shook most Americans. We've still not had a chance to recover.

Quite the contrary. Since the Department of Homeland Security began its color-coded alerts a little over a year ago, it has never designated the United States to be at less than yellow—at "significant" risk of terrorist attack. A shoe-bomber arrest, an orange alert for Christmas, checkpoints on highways and now a simulated bioterror attack in Seattle—a constant drumbeat reminds us of our vulnerability. Facing a shattered economy, the Bush Administration fans these anxieties, sending us to buy duct tape, warning us away from public monuments and scheduling the Republican Party's convention for New York City on the anniversary of 9/11. People who are afraid want to be protected and reassured, explains Barry Glassner, author of *The Culture of Fear*. When the White House tends to those fears by laying out a plan to protect Americans, however misdirected, people do not want to see those leaders undermined.

Banners reading INSTEAD OF WAR, INVEST IN PEOPLE were selected by police for removal. WE LOVE YOU, MR. PRESIDENT was allowed to stay.

The events of 9/11 were destabilizing in another way: They forced on many Americans the astonishing recognition that their country is not universally beloved. While some Americans responded with teach-ins or protests, others have acted out aggressively—think of the 2 by 4, the broken windows, the angry outbursts—to quell the expression of these troubling doubts.

The anti-dissidents don't have to look far for validation—it's available every night from the broadcast media and most days from the halls of government. Fox's Bill O'Reilly criticizes progressive *Los Angeles Times* (and *Nation*) columnist Robert Scheer by hammering him as a "traitor"; defense adviser Richard Perle, objecting to a report on his conflicts of interest, calls Seymour Hersh "the closest thing American journalism has to a terrorist." When Tom Daschle lamented the President's failure to find a diplomatic solution in Iraq, it wasn't just Rush Limbaugh who laid into the Senate minority leader, but House Speaker Dennis Hastert too, saying Daschle came "mighty close" to giving "comfort" to the enemy. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers even lashed out angrily at former generals who had aired reservations about the war strategy, questioning their "agenda."

Woodrow Wilson officially sponsored vigilantism by forming the American Protective League, citizen security forces that spied on and intimidated war critics. But then he didn't have Fox TV. Jingoistic broadcast media have provided Bush with his own "protective league" by setting the tone for repression. Who needs government censorship when stations owned by Clear Channel, the nation's largest radio chain (reaching, thanks to deregulation, 54 percent of all American adults under age 49), can drop the Dixie Chicks from their playlists, as they did in March? Clear Channel, facing a Congressional investigation into its business practices, promoted prowar rallies in cities throughout the country.

'Free-Speech Zones'

As an inflamed public, incited by government hawks and shock jocks, does its best to shut down critical speech, the state has used force to quash expression in the public square. Local police across the country have used barricades and handcuffs to assert that some speech is more free than others.

On October 24 Brett Bursey tucked a cardboard sign under his arm and headed out to the Columbia, South Carolina, airport, where President Bush was about to touch down and stump for local Republicans. But as soon as Bursey lifted his homemade NO WAR FOR OIL placard above the cheering throngs, police ordered him to leave the airport access road and take his message to a "free-speech zone" about a mile away.

When Bursey, director of the statewide Progressive Network, pointed out that people with pro-Bush banners were not being asked to move, an officer replied, "It's the content of your sign that is the problem." When Bursey refused to move, he was arrested and now faces federal charges carrying a potential penalty of six months in prison.

In St. Louis in January, where Bush was giving a presentation on his economic stimulus plan, residents lined his motorcade with flags and signs. Banners proclaiming INSTEAD OF WAR, INVEST IN PEOPLE were selected by the police for removal; WE LOVE YOU, MR. PRESIDENT was allowed to stay. Police in other cities have subjected protesters to mass arrests, questions about their political views and affiliations, and even, in Oakland, rubber bullets. Legislation proposed in Oregon would jail street-blocking demonstrators as "terrorists" for at least twenty-five years.

Just as the range of expression permitted in the public square is constricted, traditional "free-speech zones," such as campuses, find themselves under pressure to hold dissent in check as well. Middle East studies scholars have been targeted in the past year in an aggressive, highly organized campaign attacking their positions not only on the war in Iraq but on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Campus Watch, launched last September to "monitor Middle East studies" on campus, has conducted virtual witch-hunts, posting "dossiers" on individual professors, distorting their criticisms of Israeli or US policy to malign them as "apologists for Palestinian and Islamist violence." In April, Bush nominated Campus Watch founder Daniel Pipes to join the board of the United States Institute of Peace, a body designed to promote the peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

Dozens of scholars have been mercilessly harassed and threatened. According to Amy Newhall, executive director of the Middle East Studies Association, some faculty members have had to abandon their e-mail addresses because they received so much anti-Arab hate e-mail—as many as 18,000 messages in

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a single day. Some have been "spoofed," meaning hackers sent out anti-Semitic diatribes from the professor's own e-mail accounts. Some have received menacing warnings—"Your neighbors have been alerted to your allegiance to Islamic terrorists"—and threats of violence.

No sooner had Yale's Glenda Gilmore published an antiwar op-ed in the campus paper than she received a rush of rape and death threats. It turned out that Andrew Sullivan had set up a link from a blog denouncing her, and Pipes had attacked her in a hyperventilating op-ed titled "Professors Who Hate America."

In an article for *Academe*, Newhall notes that the purpose of these attacks is to stifle debate, and she warns that these efforts "will provide a model for future assaults."

At Columbia University an assistant professor of anthropology received so many death threats after remarks he made at a late March teach-in that he had to move out of his home and teach under the protection of security guards. The professor, Nicholas de Genova, was quoted by *Newsday* as saying that he hoped Iraq would defeat the United States and that he wished for "a million Mogadishus." An ugly statement, certainly, but not as extreme as Bill O'Reilly's enthusiastic on-air reading of an e-mail from a US soldier who bragged, "You would not believe the carnage. Imagine your street where you live with body parts, knee deep, with hundreds of vehicles burning and the occupants inside." On O'Reilly's remarks? Silence. But dozens of news outlets, from the *Jerusalem Post* to CNN, seized on de Genova's, portraying them as a bloodcurdling cry for American deaths. In an interview with *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, de Genova said he had hoped to "contest...the notion that an effective strategy for the antiwar movement is to capitulate to the patriotic pro-war pressure that demands that one must affirm support for the troops."

After a Yale professor published an antiwar op-ed in the campus paper, she received a rush of rape and death threats.

The debate de Genova meant to provoke, needless to say, was never engaged. In an unprecedented move, 104 Republican members of Congress signed a letter to Columbia president Lee Bollinger demanding de Genova's ouster.

The Defense Mechanisms of Democracy

Confronting the right's organized censure, and the popular patriotic flare-ups it inspires, it's easy to become demoralized. In the face of such effective pressure, says Gerald Horne, young people like his students at the University of North Carolina—who were born during Reagan's presidency—easily learn to distrust the very idea of dissent out of a feeling that the right always wins. "They have a pragmatic, if not very deep, sentiment that's the political version of 'Nobody ever got fired for buying IBM': If you want to lead a comfortable, hassle-free life and not be a loser, be with the right," he says. "Unlike in the Vietnam period, we've all become sadly familiar with TINA—there is no alternative." In such a univocal world, dissent can seem downright futile.

As the space for dissent constricts, it's global public opinion and our own domestic civic institutions of liberal democracy—the courts, opposition parties, nongovernmental organizations and the media—that have to keep the channels open for alternatives to emerge. An inquisitive and vigorous press is essential, but too much of the mainstream media quickly succumbed to Pentagon spin. NBC fired Peter Arnett for making the obvious points to Iraqi television that war planners had "misjudged the determination of the Iraqi forces" and that there was "a growing challenge to President Bush about the conduct of the war." According to a leaked memo, MSNBC's sacking of Donahue in February was the result of fear that he might ask guests tough questions about foreign policy; he was replaced by right-wingers like former Republican Congressman Joe Scarborough. *San Francisco Chronicle* technology staff writer Henry Norr was fired in April after taking a sick day to participate in an antiwar protest, and two deejays at Colorado radio station KKCS were suspended in early May for playing a Dixie Chicks tune. Aaron McGruder's acerbic antiwar comic *The Boondocks* was dropped by the *Boston Globe* in late March when McGruder penned a special antiwar "protest strip."

As for the courts, Ellen Schrecker, who has written several books about the McCarthy period, fears that they won't reverse their trade-off of rights for security the way they did some decades ago. By 1957, the Supreme Court had begun to rein in the most restrictive Red Scare laws. "They're feeble now," she says. "Twenty years of Reagan-Bush have really reconfigured the judiciary." The opposition party has also failed to rise to the occasion, leaving us, says Horne, accidental anarchists, with "no electoral vehicle through which to express dissent." What we do have is a small but vibrant alternative press, growing numbers in organizations like the ACLU, more than a hundred city councils that have voted to condemn the Patriot Act or similar measures and an inchoate protest movement that thronged the streets all winter. Howard Zinn regards these outpourings as significant, "a broader shield of protection than we had during the McCarthy period."

One of the spirited chants at the February and March demonstrations went, "This is what democracy looks like." True enough, the multiracial, intergenerational demos, which brought together Plumbers for Peace and Queers Against War, corporate attorneys, public hospital nurses, students, retirees and Sunday school teachers, reflected the vast diversity and insistent expression of the American polis. But that can't be all that democracy looks like. It takes powerful civic institutions to provide checks and balances, meaningful enfranchisement and vigorous open debate to make democracy function. None other than Donald Rumsfeld made this point recently. He was talking about Iraq.

In at least one respect, the current situation has the potential to do graver damage than even the McCarthy and Wilson eras. Historically, civil liberties have sprung back to full force when hot or cold wars have ended, thanks in large part to the perseverance, or the resuscitation, of the press, the courts and the opposition party. But in an open-ended "war on terrorism," the day when danger passes may never come. Even if it does, the democratic muscle of the courts, the press and the opposition party—already failing so miserably to flex themselves—may be too atrophied to do the heavy lifting needed to restore our fundamental rights and freedoms. ■

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Stop the Presses

(Continued From Page 10)

even decided to write on this subject for certain, *Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel received an e-mail from someone claiming to be familiar with the case arguing that Fund was guilty of the physical abuse and suggesting, therefore, that the magazine should discourage me from writing this column. A few of my liberal media friends—no quotation marks necessary in this case—concurred.

Let the gossip columnists answer for themselves. But if we on the left do not stand up for inconvenient truths, really, what good are we? I don't mind the idea of a liberal Rush Limbaugh dishing it out on talk radio or cable TV the way we are always expected to take it. And I do admit to loving *Media Whores Online*, even though it leaps over the bounds of good taste with alarming frequency. But the smearing of Fund raises questions that define us morally and politically. It did not take a lot of investigation on my part to conclude that Pillsbury was not the kind of source one could legitimately use to hang a man in public. Why were so many so eager to use her that way? No principle was at stake. It was all about payback.

I would amend Talbot's claim to read, "Ugly tactics make for ugly people." As with fighting the Stalinists in the cold war, or terrorists in our own day, if our enemies succeed in making us more like them, they can claim a kind of victory. To my genuine regret, John Fund comes out the winner in this tawdry story, alas, in more ways than one. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

appealed to the union late last year to help address the problem of a drastically reduced workload, it refused to seriously discuss Verizon's proposals. When the company offered a tough but fair proposal that would have avoided many layoffs, the union came up with a proposal that called for a 25 percent raise within a year, eight weeks of vacation and a reduced workweek for increased pay.

As conditions change, companies have to change with them or fail. Union leaders can't seem to understand that without healthy companies, there will be no jobs—union or otherwise. The telecom sector has lost more than 500,000 jobs in the past two years, but just a tiny fraction of that has been at Verizon, another fact the article conveniently omitted.

The challenges facing the telecom industry can only be solved with creativity and cooperation on everyone's part. PETER W. THONIS
Verizon

COHEN AND EARLY REPLY

Washington, DC; Arlington, Mass.

■ The fact that union contract talks are about to start at Verizon hasn't stopped its top executives from doing plenty of their own soapboxing lately—in public forums and other media outlets (with larger circulation than *The Nation*). Let's start by putting last year's layoff-related discussions in the proper factual context.

The company's "tough but fair proposal" would merely have postponed much job loss until this August. In return, workers were asked to reopen their contract and accept a two-year wage freeze, benefit givebacks, scheduling changes, weakening of job security provisions and greater management flexibility to contract out locally or transfer work from the Northeast to other parts of the country where Verizon operates with lower labor costs.

Shortly before these demands were made, the company posted third-quarter results, which included a doubling of net income due to asset sales, investments and what the *Wall Street Journal* called "a solid operating performance... buoyed by strong gains at Verizon Wireless." Needless to say—even when threatened with downsizing—local union leaders rejected such major concessions, as they will again in bargaining this summer.

Peter Thonis ignores management's responsibility for the problems that VZ does face. The company's current cost-cutting drive is designed to reduce an enormous debt load built up during an acquisition binge that saddled it with $12 billion worth of bad deals. In New York, VZ's reduction in jobs (23 percent) and capital spending (34 percent) is totally disproportionate to the decline in local access lines (3.9 percent) and revenue (5.8 percent). Service quality has suffered as a result, which is why the New York Public Service Commission is expected this month to order a $15 million consumer rebate for substandard service.

Thonis has "conveniently omitted" another important fact. One of the cellular companies "making dramatic inroads" into VZ's landline customer base is... Verizon Wireless, its own subsidiary. In contrast to Cingular Wireless, its main competitor, VZW has shown total disregard for workers' rights to organize and bargain—in violation of the current contract. Perhaps "creativity and cooperation on everyone's part" can solve that problem in upcoming negotiations. LARRY COHEN AND STEVE EARLY

NO NANNIES ARE GOOD NANNIES?

San Diego

■ While washing dishes this afternoon I found my mind drifting back to the words of Susan J. Douglas in her April 28 review ["The New Globetrotters"] of Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*:

"All women who employ nannies" she writes, "are not Cruella DeVil; many are frazzled, guilty and hate being made complicit in a system of racial domination. But sometimes they really do not have a choice." I am reminded of George Herbert Walker Bush declaring that sanctions against South Africa would not work, because American women couldn't live without their diamonds.

Every woman who refuses to *make herself complicit* in a system of racial domination does so at a price. Often the price is fairly low—having a messy house, for example. Other times the price is extremely high. I, for one, have chosen not to have children if I am unable to care for them myself. Isn't this what policy-makers have been preaching to poor women for years?
TAMARA JOHNSON

KUDOS TO PRESS

Columbus, Ohio

■ Thank you for the most sensible article on torture I've seen, Eyal Press's "In Torture We Trust?" [March 31]. You point out that the "ticking bomb" example is phony, that torture isn't about saving lives but about reinforcing the belief that your "enemy" is less human than you are, and that the torturer does not come away unscathed. LINDA SLEFFEL

Washington, DC

■ On behalf of the members of TASSC, each of whom is a survivor of torture, I write to thank you for confronting the US government on an issue many seek to ignore. *The Nation*'s commitment to truth gives us the courage to keep knocking on the doors and consciences of our world's leaders. SISTER DIANNA ORTIZ
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International

THE SOUND OF MUZAK

Hope, Me.

■ With apologies to Calvin Trillin. (Picture Bush, Powell and Cheney in nuns' habits):

How do you solve a problem like Korea?
How do you stop a nuclear Iran?
Don't bother to ask us how
Just shut up—we'll bomb them now
And set up refugees in a Bushistan...
STEFAN LOW

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 7)

Surprisingly, South African President Thabo Mbeki has criticized the lawsuits, saying, "We consider it completely unacceptable that matters that are central to the future of our country should be adjudicated in foreign courts." His minister of trade and industry went so far as to say that the government would not allow any foreign judgments to be enforced in South Africa.

US Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans, describing the lawsuits as an "unhelpful" development, urged the South African government to make clear that it does not support them.

The battle over corporate responsibility for international human rights violations is only beginning. One way to avoid long court struggles was suggested by former Carter and Clinton administration official Stuart Eizenstat, who has helped settle Holocaust claims. In 1997 a convention established standards to combat international bribery, to which more than thirty countries agreed. Eizenstat proposes that a similar international convention establish guidelines on corporate responsibility for human rights violations. Corporations could sign on to the agreement and abide by voluntary monitoring. If lawsuits were filed, the standards could provide guidelines for the courts.

For some South Africans, a gnawing feeling persists that the injustices of apartheid have not been laid to rest. In reply, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said, "There has been considerable generosity on the part of the victims. It should have been answered by those who benefited from apartheid, but the beneficiaries have engaged in sophistry." While emphasizing that the victims have the right to compensation, the archbishop added that it would be better if the issues were settled outside of court.

Currently, Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane is trying to negotiate a settlement in South Africa. Archbishop Tutu says if the litigation continues, he hopes it can be decided expeditiously. Otherwise "it will keep us emotionally at a point we have gone past in our journey to reconciliation." JOHN S. FRIEDMAN

John S. Friedman is an investigative journalist and documentary filmmaker whose latest film is Stealing the Fire.

And the Poor Pay Taxes...

Just in case you didn't have a clue who George W. Bush's friends are, a peek into the recent enforcement actions and inactions of the Internal Revenue Service will offer some guidance on this matter.

Item. While the number of tax returns filed each year has grown by 12 percent in the past decade, the number of agents able to conduct face-to-face audits of taxpayer returns has fallen by 25 percent, from 16,000 to 12,000. Moreover, according to data collected and analyzed by a tax watchdog group at Syracuse University, the targets of these audits tend not to be large corporations and the wealthy but the proverbial "little guy."

Item. Recently, the IRS announced it was beefing up its audits of those claiming the earned-income tax credit (EITC), which supplements the salaries of low-income workers. To be eligible for this program, your household income may not exceed $35,000. To add insult to injury, as many as 9 million low-income workers are excluded from the President's proposed $725 billion tax relief package pending in Congress. In other words, the President is excluding from the tax cut those most likely to provide stimulus to the economy by spending any additional income they receive.

Unquestionably, the Administration is legitimately concerned about the estimated $9 billion in fraudulent payments made to EITC recipients each year. So the Treasury Department announced it will ask Congress for $100 million to hire 650 new employees whose job it will be to determine the eligibility of EITC participants, in an effort to ferret out fraud. Still, those who follow the massive $250 billion-a-year underground economy, like Harvard economist Mihir Desai, maintain there would be much bigger bang for the buck if these same resources were devoted to pursuing offshore accounts and other scam tax shelters. As proof, Professor Desai points to evidence he has collected that shows that corporations have managed to avoid as much as $54 billion in taxes yearly by hiding about $155 billion in profits in tax shelters.

As the enforcement resources of the IRS have dwindled over the past decade, the odds of anyone except the working poor actually being audited stand at less than one in a hundred. And the chances of actually being criminally prosecuted for income tax evasion are even smaller.

It is undeniable that the IRS is in dire need of increased funding so it can go after the big fish. But Congress—Republicans and Democrats alike—has historically starved the agency of the funds it needs to pursue major tax cheats. So while it recognizes that there must be a tax collection authority, Congress keeps the IRS at a funding level that makes it virtually impossible for the agency to do a good job. Is it any wonder, then, that tax avoidance may be fast approaching online-music file-swapping as a new national pastime? And the long-term effects of such a prospect can't be healthy for a democracy, especially with so much red ink looming in future federal budgets.

Former New York hotel queen Leona Helmsley famously told a housekeeper more than a decade ago, "We don't pay taxes. Only the little people pay taxes." With George W. Bush in the White House, her words ring even truer today. ROY ULRICH

Roy Ulrich is the president of the California Tax Reform Association.

NATION NOTES

Congratulations to the *Nation* circulation staff, Art Stupar, Michelle O'Keefe and Inga Knets, who have won a Gold Award from *Circulation Management* magazine. The award honors "strategic circulation achievements." *The Nation* is currently at its highest circulation ever—135,000.

ON THE WEB: Miranda Kennedy explains why Coke and McDonald's are no longer hip in New Delhi; Sasha Polansky examines restrictions on Peace Corps volunteers' free-speech rights; and Paul Webster reports on Chernobyl's legacy (www.thenation.com).

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The New Yorker Goes to War

How a Nice Magazine Talked Itself Into Backing Bush's Jihad

DANIEL LAZARE

In its first issue after the fall of the World Trade Center, *The New Yorker* published a handful of short reaction pieces by John Updike, Jonathan Franzen and others about the horror that had just occurred in lower Manhattan. Only one really stood out, however: an angry and eloquent blast by Susan Sontag at "a robotic president who assures us that America still stands tall" and robotic politicians who "apparently feel free to say nothing more than that they stand united behind President Bush." In the wake of the Twin Towers attack, Sontag wrote, Americans had much to ponder "about the ineptitude of American intelligence and counterintelligence, about options available to American foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East, and about what constitutes a smart program of military defense." Yet rather than thinking, politicians and the press were engaging in "confidence-building and grief management." Where Americans had once been contemptuous of Soviet yes-men, their own representatives were proving no less acquiescent in the crunch as the Bush Administration geared up for war. "The unanimity of the sanctimonious, reality-concealing rhetoric spouted by American officials and media commentators in recent days," she declared, "seems, well, unworthy of a mature democracy."

The essay, less than 500 words long, unleashed a torrent of right-wing abuse, most of it zeroing in on Sontag's parenthetical point that, by themselves, courage and cowardice are morally neutral—their moral quality depends entirely on the ends they serve. Hence: "Whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards." Andrew Sullivan called it "deranged" and Charles Krauthammer said Sontag was morally obtuse, while Rod Dreher, a columnist for the *New York Post*, expressed a desire "to walk barefoot on broken glass across the Brooklyn Bridge, up to that despicable woman's apartment, grab her by the neck, drag her down to ground zero and force her to say that to the firefighters."

"I didn't agree at all with Susan Sontag's now famous four paragraphs," editor David Remnick subsequently confessed in an interview with a Japanese newspaper, and the magazine's coverage showed it. Never again would *The New Yorker* publish anything as remotely outspoken about Bush's War on Terrorism, by Sontag or by anyone else. While criticism of the White House did not exactly vanish, it unquestionably wound down, growing more tempered and balanced as the editors struggled to find something nice to say about Administration policies.

David Remnick has made The New Yorker *a player on prime-time debates over American foreign policy, but at a high price.*

House liberal Hendrik Hertzberg continued to turn out editorials that were skeptical and irreverent (although, this being *The New Yorker*, never very angry). But he found himself regularly checked by Remnick, who weighed in at crucial moments with "Talk of the Town" comments that, after the usual hemming and hawing, inevitably concluded that the White House was on the right track after all. Rather than challenge the hawks, the magazine either confined itself to criticisms of the way the war was being conducted or, in a few instances, sought to one-up the boys on the Defense Policy Board by running terrorist scare stories more lurid than even they could dream up. In the end, the magazine wound up endorsing just the sort of war policies it had warned against back in September 2001. Rather than opposing robotic yes-man politics, it ended up practicing them.

The New Yorker has not been the only

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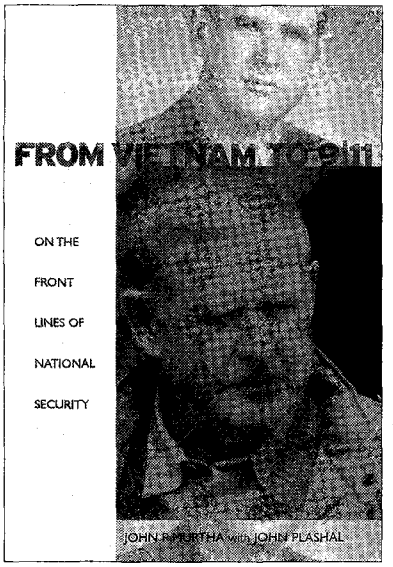

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publication to fall into line behind the Bush Administration's war drive, but for a number of reasons its performance seems especially disappointing. One reason has to do with the magazine's track record. One doesn't have to be a William Shawn devotee to agree that the magazine has published some astonishing journalism over the years—Hannah Arendt's "Eichmann in Jerusalem," James Baldwin's "Letter from a Region of My Mind," Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring," Jonathan Schell's pieces on Vietnam and Pauline Kael's wonderful demolition job on Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, to name just a few. During the Vietnam War, it was one of the few mainstream publications to try to unmask the sordid reality behind the brass's regular 5 o'clock press briefings. And if it published too many long and hyperfactual stories in the 1980s about wheat or geology, at least it preferred being trivial and obscure to the glories of being a team player in Washington, which is a moral stance of a sort.

Though its style may have been genteel, *The New Yorker* succeeded in challenging middle-class sensibilities more often than any number of scruffier publications. Another reason to mourn the magazine's lack of resistance is that it represents an opportunity lost. Just as the magazine helped middle-class opinion to coalesce against US intervention in Vietnam, it might well have served a similar function today by clarifying what is at stake in the Middle East. Rather than unveil the reality behind a spurious War on Terrorism, though, *The New Yorker* helped obscure it by painting Bush's crusade as a natural and inevitable response to the World Trade Center/Pentagon attack and, as a consequence, useless to oppose. Instead of encouraging opposition, it helped defuse it. From shocking the bourgeoisie, it has moved on to placating it at a time when it has rarely been more dangerous and bellicose.

How does a magazine bring itself to such a pass? The process probably began when Tina Brown took over in 1992. Politically, Brown wasn't left wing or right wing so much as no wing. She fawned over Ronald and Nancy Reagan in *Vanity Fair* and then, a dozen years later, fawned over Bill Clinton in *The New Yorker* ("his height, his sleekness, his newly cropped, iron-filing hair, and the intensity of his blue eyes..."). While publishing the occasional exposé, such as Mark Danner's memorable "Massacre at El Mozote," she was more concerned with putting the magazine in the swim. David Remnick, who succeeded her in 1998, is a different case. Where Brown is catty and mischievous, his style is earnest and respectable. Although a talented reporter and a graceful writer, he lacks Brown's irreverent streak. (One can hardly imagine him writing a first-person account of dancing topless in New Jersey, or whatever the male equivalent might be, as Brown famously did at the beginning of her career.) Remnick's 1993 book, *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*, dutifully followed the Washington line in reducing a complex historical event to a simple-minded melodrama about noble dissidents versus evil Communist *apparatchiki*. Under his leadership, *The New Yorker* has never seemed more like a tame, middle-of-the-road news magazine with cartoons, which may explain why its political writers, people like Nicholas Lemann, Jeffrey Goldberg and Remnick himself, have never enjoyed more airtime on shows like *Charlie Rose*. In traveling from irreverence to reverence, it helps to have someone in charge with a heat-seeking missile's ability to home in on the proper establishment position at any given moment. But it also helps to have someone who knows when to ask the tough questions and when to turn them off.

A magazine like *The New Yorker*, of course, is a diverse and sprawling thing. It speaks with many voices, not all of whom completely agree. If Remnick leans to the right, Hertzberg still leans to the left, leaving it to the reader to triangulate between the two. Reporters like Jane Mayer and Jon Lee Anderson, for their part, have raised uncomfortable questions about the War on Terrorism. Still, an overall conservative turn has been apparent from nearly the moment the Twin Towers collapsed.

In its initial post-9/11 issue, for instance, the same one in which Sontag's mini-blast appeared, Hertzberg noted in "The Talk of the Town" that the Bush Administration was describing the assault on the World Trade Center and Pentagon "with growing ferocity...as acts of war." Instead of jumping on board, Hertzberg was duly cautious in his response: "Unless a foreign government turns out to have directed the operation (or, at least, to have known and approved its scope in detail and in advance), that is a category mistake." *Pace* Bush, harboring a terrorist did not make one as guilty as a terrorist; rather, you had to know what he was up to and be a party to his plans to be placed on the same moral footing.

Sobriety like that was a rare commodity in those superheated days. But then, sensing perhaps that too much sobriety might be a dangerous thing, Remnick enlisted Hertzberg a week later in co-writing an editorial

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stating that war was justified after all. "The trope of war has been omnipresent since the day of the attack," the two men wrote, and "President Bush did not, and could not, retreat from it." Still, "even as the President spoke of war his remarks reflected an awareness of the snares that word carries. Justice, more than war, was the speech's theme." This was the September 20, 2001, televised address in which Bush told the world, "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." Instead of targeting terrorists, he was now targeting those who failed to show sufficient alacrity for the new American jihad. Yet somehow Remnick and Hertzberg persuaded themselves that the President's remarks "went some distance in reassuring those who feared that his response to this crisis would be a primitive spasm of vengeful violence." Once *The New Yorker* convinced itself that Bush was well intentioned even if his performance was sometimes maladroit, it became one more courtier straining to get the king's ear.

A month later, the magazine published an investigative report by Seymour Hersh blaming a Pentagon culture of "political correctness" for the failure to assassinate Mullah Muhammad Omar. According to Hersh, military personnel could have taken the Taliban leader out with a Hellfire missile strike once a Predator drone got him in its sights. But they were blocked by overscrupulous higher-ups who "want you to kill the guy, but not the guy next to him," as one of his sources in the military put it. It was a form of legal squeamishness, apparently, that the Pentagon would soon overcome. Two months later Hersh explored the growing neocon push for an invasion of Iraq. But rather than ask why the United States was targeting Saddam despite a lack of evidence tying him to 9/11, Hersh confined himself to the purely practical question of whether the hawks could pull it off. "The issue is not how nice it would be to get rid of Saddam," he quoted one former Defense Department official as saying. "The problem is feasibility." If the United States could do it, in other words, it should.

To be fair, Hersh's reporting has grown more critical of late. *The New Yorker*'s overwhelmingly antiwar readership no doubt cheered when his March 17 report about superhawk Richard Perle's business dealings with Saudi-born arms merchant Adnan Khashoggi led to Perle's resignation as chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board. Ripping into the work of special Pentagon intelligence analysts assigned to find proof of Saddam's ties to Al Qaeda and the arsenal of forbidden weapons he had supposedly assembled, Hersh quoted an angry ex-CIA official as saying, "They were so crazed and so far out and difficult to reason with—to the point of being bizarre. Dogmatic, as if on a mission from God." This was strong stuff. But in discussing how they may have allowed themselves to be duped by their own propaganda, Hersh couldn't bring himself to mention the likelier possibility—that "intelligence" like this is a smokescreen and that, from the analysts on up, the Bush Administration has simply lied. *The New Yorker* may criticize aspects of the War on Terrorism, but to suggest that Bush's jihad is fraudulent remains beyond the pale.

Indeed, the closest the magazine came to such heresy was in an October 2002 article by Nicholas Lemann. As the author of *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* and, more recently, *The Big Test*, a study of standardized exams, Lemann has done some important work in the past. But as *The New Yorker*'s Washington correspondent, he seems to have reinvented himself as the sort of starstruck journalist who daydreams about flyfishing with Dick Cheney and gushes over Condoleezza Rice: "To spend time with Rice is to see right away how she has such an effect on people. 'Condi is just an A-plus-plus-plus presence,' one former Administration official who knows her says. 'She's the most gifted speaker and conveyer of solid thoughts, in articulate form, of anybody I've ever met.'"

On this occasion, however, Lemann allowed a bit of irony to peek out from behind that deadpan prose. In the year since the assault on the World Trade Center, he noted, Bush had won the foreign policy battle merely by getting everyone to parrot the words "War on Terror." "The phrase," he wrote, "meets the basic test of Presidential rhetoric: it has entered the language so fully, and framed the way people think about how the United States is reacting to the September 11th attacks so completely, that the idea that declaring and waging war on terror was not the sole, inevitable, logical consequence of the attacks just isn't in circulation."

Quite right. But Lemann might have added that not only were contrary ideas not in circulation among the policy elite in Washington, they were not in circulation among the editorial elite in Times Square, where Remnick & Co. had also allowed the White House to set the terms of the debate. Despite occasional reservations about the White House's saber-rattling, *The New Yorker* remained a prisoner of the emerging Bush doctrine of pre-emptive warfare.

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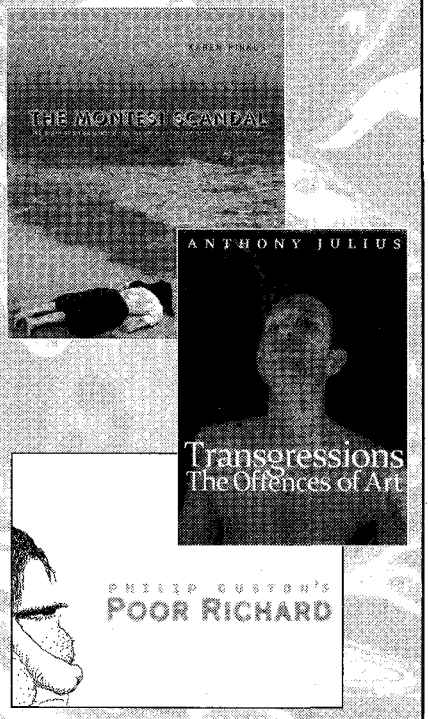

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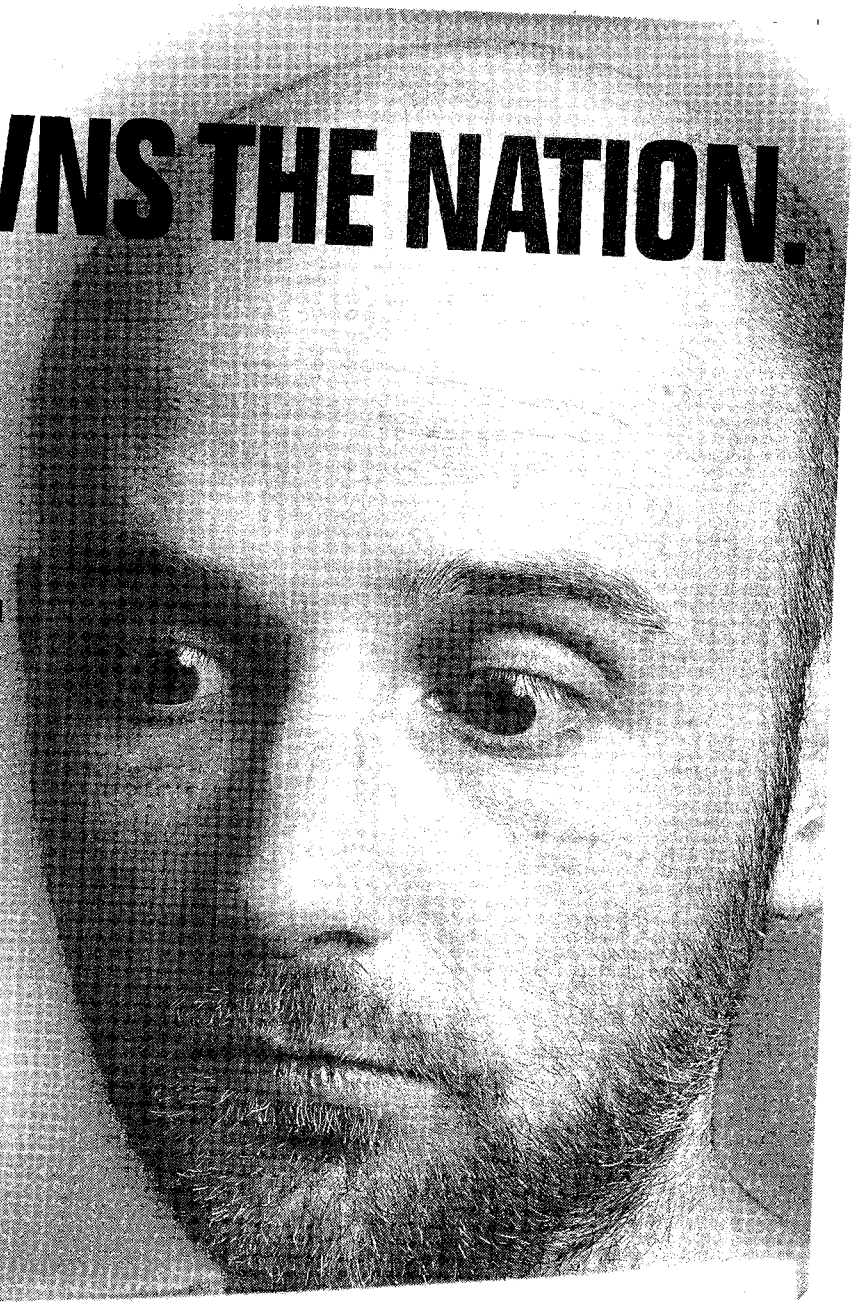

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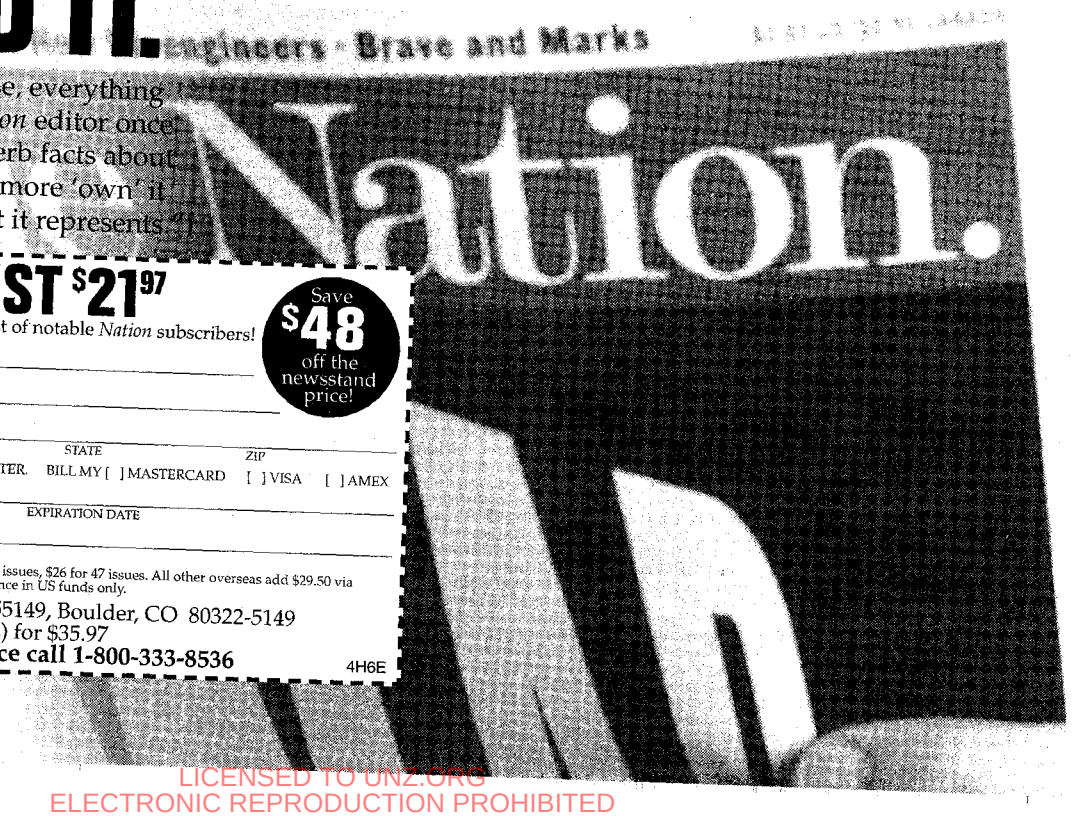

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The growing number of articles that the magazine has run since 9/11 on the subject of terrorism and the Middle East have been equally skewed. Whenever *The New Yorker* uses the word "terror" or one of its cognates, for instance, it is almost always in an Arab or Muslim context. While a Nexis search turns up numerous references in the magazine to Palestinian, Egyptian and Pakistani terrorism since the Twin Towers attack, it turns up no references to US or Israeli terrorism or, for that matter, to terrorism on the part of Christians or Jews. A Nexis search over the same period reveals that the word "fundamentalism" appears almost always in an Islamic context as well. In this modern update of Saul Steinberg's "View of the World from Ninth Avenue," religious fanatics are mostly Muslim, occasionally Christian, but—despite all those Uzi-toting settlers—never, ever Jewish.

In The New Yorker, *radical fundamentalists are mostly Muslim, occasionally Christian, but never, ever Jewish.*

Examples of such one-sidedness range from the subtle to the egregious—and, as is often the case, it is the former that are most interesting. In an article last September about Gershom Scholem, the famous scholar of Jewish mysticism, the novelist Cynthia Ozick concluded with an impassioned peroration on the subject of Scholem's twin religious and political obsessions: "In Kabbalistic symbolism, with its tragic intuition that the world is broken, that all things are not in their proper places, that God, too, is in exile, Scholem saw both a confirmation of the long travail of Jewish dispersion and its consolation: the hope of redemption. In short, he saw Zionism." Many of us have gotten so used to nationalist rhetoric of this sort that we no longer notice. But can anyone imagine *The New Yorker* celebrating Islam in such a fashion and winding up with an equally passionate embrace of Arab nationalism?

Two months after the September 11 attacks, *The New Yorker* published Bernard Lewis's 9,000-word essay, "The Revolt of Islam," which, while certainly timely, was replete with reckless generalizations about a "Muslim world" and "Muslim peoples" turning their backs on modernity. Lewis's description of Islamic fundamentalism as essentially an internal Muslim development was seriously misleading. As Eqbal Ahmad and Richard Barnet argued in *The New Yorker*—the old *New Yorker*—back in 1988, the United States did as much to fuel Wahhabist militancy as the Saudis themselves, by funding a fundamentalist mujahedeen army to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Rather than solely Muslim in origin, the dramatic spread of Wahhabism since the 1970s is an ideological byproduct of a US-Saudi alliance based equally on anti-Communism and oil. By focusing narrowly on Islam's rejection of modernity, moreover, Lewis implied that the Judeo-Christian West's relationship to modernity is healthy and normal. One would never suspect that the President of the United States is a born-again Christian who believes that "on the issue of evolution, the verdict is still out on how God created the earth"; that the House majority leader (Tom DeLay) believes that "only Christianity offers a comprehensive worldview that covers all areas of life and thought, every aspect of creation"; or that the Attorney General (John Ashcroft) is such an extreme fundamentalist that he had himself biblically anointed before being sworn in as governor of Missouri. While Lewis would like us to believe that the fundamentalist rejection of modernity is the Islamic world's problem and not ours, in fact it is both.

As crude and reductive as this was, however, it was sophisticated stuff compared with the dispatches of staff writer Jeffrey Goldberg, who more than any other writer embodies the magazine's rightward drift vis-à-vis the Middle East. In early 2000, staff writer Mary Anne Weaver had argued that the idea of Osama bin Laden as an all-powerful Svengali in charge of a global array of terrorist organizations was overblown—a judgment that still holds up despite the astonishing feat that he and his minions were able to pull off in September 2001. But, post-9/11, tempered arguments such as these would no longer do. Hence, the terrorism beat was handed over to Goldberg, who, although born in America, had served in the Israeli army during the first intifada and had gone on to write for *The New Republic* and *The New York Times Magazine*. With a seemingly unlimited travel budget, Goldberg set about unearthing terrorist conspiracies from South America to northern Iraq.

At its best, Goldberg's journalism (which, remarkably, recently earned him a National Magazine Award) is only slightly more blinkered than the magazine as a whole. In "A Letter From Cairo," which followed the assault on the World Trade Center by just three weeks, he described a growing epidemic of anti-Semitism among Egyptians outraged by America's blanket support for Israel. The report was not inaccurate, as far as it went. But with 32 percent of Americans believing that Arabs living in the United States should be placed under special surveillance, according to one post-9/11 poll, Goldberg might have noted that bigotry is hardly limited to one side. While it is certainly distressing that many Egyptians believe that Israel's security service, the Mossad, was somehow at the bottom of the Twin Towers attack, as Goldberg also reported, it is no less disturbing that, according to a recent New York Times/CBS News Poll, a majority of Americans believe Saddam Hussein was responsible, a fact *The New Yorker* has scarcely acknowledged.

But if Goldberg's articles are blinkered at best, at worst they are—to put this as politely as possible—examples of irresponsible fearmongering whose principal effect has been to fuel the White House war drive. Last spring Goldberg published a massive article about the Kurds of northern Iraq. Its description of the 1988 poison-gas attack on the city of Halabja was vivid and frightening, but it was only one item in a farrago of charges aimed at America's latest villain du jour. While all eyes in the West have been on the 5,000 deaths in Halabja, Goldberg argued that Saddam had gassed "perhaps" 200 villages, with up to 400,000 people poisoned in all. In the course of some 16,000 words, he went on to accuse Saddam of supplying Al Qaeda with chemical and biological weapons, of controlling the tiny fundamentalist group Ansar al-Islam, of attempting to build nuclear arms and of plotting to unleash bio, chemical and nuclear WMDs on other countries.

Indeed, Goldberg suggested that Saddam was responsible for everything in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq from an epidemic of birth defects to an increase in the population of poisonous snakes. The number of villages that he said had been attacked with poison gas was more than triple the figure that a comprehensive study by Human Rights Watch had come up with several years earlier, yet the evidence Goldberg offered to back up his account was remarkably thin: eyewitness accounts more than a dozen years after the fact; the "expert" testimony of a lone English geneticist so alarmist that she carries bleach and an oversized plastic bag whenever she visits a shopping mall, to protect against chemical attack; plus various alarmist comments, cited without qualification, by pro-Administration hawks like Ahmad Chalabi, Kanan Makiya and James Woolsey. Goldberg's chief source for the supposed three-

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way mutual-aid pact between Baghdad and Al Qaeda was a 29-year-old accused drug runner languishing in a Kurdish prison, whose captors released him from his cell just long enough for him to fill Goldberg's ear with the latest scoop on the Iraqi leader's nefarious activities.

It was the sort of "reporting" that only hawks could love—and they did. At a news conference a few days later, Bush told reporters: "Evidently, there's a new article in the *New York* magazine or *New Yorker* magazine—some East Coast magazine—and it details about his barbaric behavior toward his own people. And not only did he do it to his own people, he did it to people in his neighborhood. And this is a man who refuses to allow us to determine whether or not he still has weapons of mass destruction, which leads me to believe he does." Dick Cheney added shortly on *Meet the Press*, "It's a devastating article.... It demonstrates conclusively what a lot of us have said: that this is a man who is a great danger to that region of the world—especially if he's able to acquire nuclear weapons."

The article certainly generated "buzz," as Tina Brown might have put it. Never mind that, as Jason Burke pointed out in the London *Observer*, the search for a link between Al Qaeda and small but militant groups like Ansar al-Islam was likely to come up dry, since Islamic fundamentalism is a diverse, spontaneous and decentralized movement in which Al Qaeda is "nothing more than primus inter pares." The Bush Administration needed a link in order to keep its theory of a unified terrorist conspiracy going, and *The New Yorker* was happy to provide it.

In another article, Goldberg offered little more than the word of various unnamed South American "experts," "investigators" and "intelligence sources" for his claim that Hezbollah, Hamas and Al Qaeda have established a fundraising network among Lebanese traders dealing in black-market CDs and pharmaceuticals along the Paraguayan-Brazilian border. The piece provided important ammunition not only for those wishing to promote the idea of a centralized, global conspiracy but also for those neocons pushing for an extension of hostilities to Iran and Syria, Hezbollah's prime backers.

Finally, in early February, just as preparations for an Iraq invasion were entering their last stages and popular opposition was mounting worldwide, *The New Yorker* ran yet another Goldberg report on the alleged Baghdad/Al Qaeda connection, this time one that dispensed with unidentified sources and instead relied solely on the word of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith and the ubiquitous James Woolsey. Goldberg dutifully jotted down all that they told him about the ties between Saddam and bin Laden, which, needless to say, were unmistakably close. Woolsey, for one, declared that, as Goldberg put it, "it is now illogical to doubt the notion that Saddam collaborates with Islamist terrorism." The reason: "Islamist terrorists" had been spotted taking instructions in airline hijacking at an Iraqi training camp known as Salman Pak. In fact, as Hersh revealed in *The New Yorker* in May, Salman Pak was being used to train *counterterrorists* to fight radical fundamentalists.

Goldberg's piece appeared a week after Remnick argued in "The Talk of the Town" that while there was "no indisputable evidence of [an Iraqi] connection with the Al Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington" and no "irrefutable evidence" concerning Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, such things didn't matter. War was still justified. Since "it is not...difficult to hide centrifuges or gallons of anthrax in a country that is larger than Germany," the mere possibility that Saddam had WMDs squirreled away was all that was needed to launch an invasion. "History will not easily excuse us," Remnick wrote, "if...we defer a reckoning with an aggressive totalitarian leader who intends not only to develop weapons of mass destruction but also to use them." Since Rumsfeld, Feith et al. had assured us that this is what Saddam intended to do, that was all we needed to know. The rest was superfluous. And if US troops now tramping through the rubble of Iraq have yet to turn up a single vial of anthrax or canister of poison gas, that is superfluous as well. Iraqi WMDs are yesterday's news. What concerns us today are the chemical weapons that the Bush Administration tells us are stashed away in Baathist Syria. The Administration says they exist, so they must be there...somewhere.

Should we care that "the voice of this magazine has been quite clearly aggressive in its support of the war," as Remnick told a Scottish newspaper last September? The answer, obviously, is yes. *The New Yorker* may be just one example of a magazine that has lost its bearings, but, given its journalistic track record, its massive circulation (nearly a million) and the remarkable hold it still has on a major chunk of the reading public, it's an unusually important one. Where once it used its institutional heft to help broaden American politics, now it is helping to narrow them. When

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The New Yorker runs a clever and amusing profile of a colorful character like the Slovenian social theorist Slavoj Zizek, as it recently did, the main purpose is to give an appearance of openness while assuring readers that such radical critics remain safely marginalized. Meanwhile, it seems highly unlikely that the magazine would publish articles by the likes of Hannah Arendt or Pauline Kael, hard-hitting intellectual warriors whose goal was to challenge conventional wisdom head-on. People like that couldn't have cared less about respectability. The idea that we should put aside all doubts and take people like Rumsfeld or Woolsey at their word would have left them incredulous.

But, then, irreverence, independence, intellectual daring—such things have been suspended for the foreseeable future. We must swallow our skepticism and fall into line. Criticism must be constructive, which is to say it must not call into question the premises of the War on Terrorism, or the good intentions of those conducting it. One is reminded of the old Dwight Macdonald line about *The New Yorker* existing to make us "laugh and lie down," except for two things. Rather than passivity and enervation, the goal now is loyalty and mobilization. And as for making us laugh—well, maybe it's the sour mood we find ourselves in nowadays, but *The New Yorker* no longer seems quite as funny. ■

The Misuses of Allegory

ILAN STAVANS

THE CAVE. By José Saramago. Harcourt Brace. 307 pp. $25.

Is José Saramago an anti-Semite? The answer might be allegorical. In March 2002, during a visit to Ramallah with seven other delegates of the International Parliament of Writers, Saramago compared the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories to the extermination of Jews in Auschwitz. Saramago's remarks provoked an uproar, especially in Israel, where he has many admirers. Readers in Tel Aviv, Haifa and other metropolitan areas returned such masterpieces as *The Death of Ricardo Reis* and *Blindness* to stores in protest. The controversy spread beyond the Middle East: Saramago's comments were widely condemned in newspapers and magazines in Europe and the Americas.

I, for my part, have been a passionate admirer of Saramago since the early 1990s, when I first reviewed him for *The Nation*. My initial reaction to his remarks was one of disbelief, followed by dismay. Saramago deserves credit for having gone to Ramallah and borne witness to the suffering of ordinary Palestinians. But the Auschwitz analogy is reckless. While there are disconcerting parallels between the Israeli occupation and the ghettoization of Jews under National Socialism—as numerous Israeli critics, from the late philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz to former Knesset member Shulamit Aloni have pointed out—Israel is not exterminating Palestinians. Ramallah may resemble a prison, but it is far from being a death camp.

A few weeks after the Saramago controversy broke out, I had a public conversation with him at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. In preparation, I spent several days reading recently published interviews and essays in Portuguese, and rereading his novels. I also discussed his politics (Saramago remains a member of Portugal's Communist Party) with colleagues, notably Saramago's friend in Porto Alegre, the Brazilian-Jewish novelist Moacyr Scliar.

I asked Saramago, point-blank, if he was an anti-Semite. His answer was a categorical no. He repeated to me what he had told the newspaper *Ha'aretz*: The role of the intellectual is "to make emotional comparisons that would shock people into understanding." He also wondered if "the Jews who died in Nazi concentration camps were persecuted throughout history, or forgotten in ghettoes...if that vast multitude of the wretched would not feel ashamed to see the vile acts their descendants are committing" in the occupied territories. He added: "I wonder if having suffered so much would not be the main reason to spare others suffering."

When I pressed him further about the

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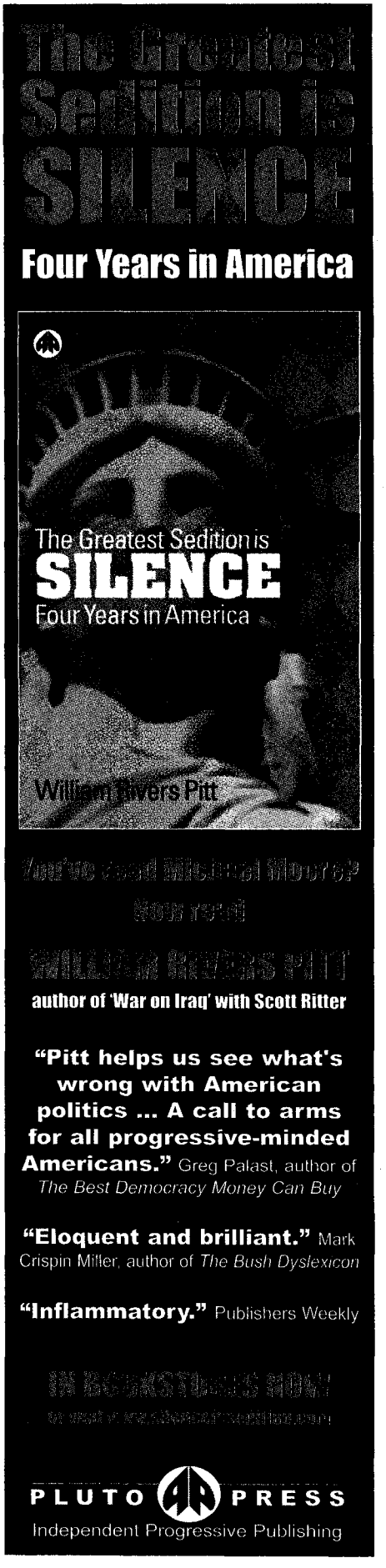
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precise nature of his remarks in Ramallah, he tried to persuade me and the audience that the Israeli press had taken his views out of context. But had it really? Saramago didn't deny that he had likened Ramallah to Auschwitz, nor did he apologize. The dialogue left me frustrated.

The appearance in English of his novel *The Cave*, originally published in Lisbon in 2000, and lucidly translated by Margaret Jull Costa, provides an opportunity to revisit the question of Saramago's politics. Rich in allusions and archetypes, this brilliant novel opens with a quote from Plato's *Republic*: "What a strange scene you describe and what strange prisoners. They are just like us." As is often the case with Saramago, the coordinates of time and space are left vague, although, judging by the references to technology (TV, electricity, amusement parks), we seem to be somewhere in the present. The world of *The Cave* is dominated by The Center, a sinister mega-mall of fashionable stores, offices, apartments, arcades. The protagonist is Cipriano Algor, a 64-year-old potter who has spent his entire life in a small village and represents, quite literally, The Periphery. He lives humbly with his daughter, Marta, and his son-in-law, Marçal Gacho, who works as a security guard in The Center. Early in the story, Cipriano is informed by the authorities that The Center will no longer buy his pots and jars, since customers now prefer plastic; he has been made obsolete.

Cipriano's dilemma takes him on an unexpected journey that radically tests his values. First, he stumbles upon a dog, which he names Found and which becomes his closest companion. With his daughter's encouragement, he decides that if The Center doesn't want pots and jars, then he should think of another item to sell. He and his daughter come up with an idea: small human figures dressed in multiple costumes. He presents them to the authorities and, to his surprise, he receives a new commission. Before long, he leaves his village to move to The Center, along with his daughter and son-in-law. Suddenly, his life has meaning again.

Or so it seems. In fact, poor Cipriano is being set up for a fall. After moving to The Center, he discovers that unimpeded movement there is forbidden. The inhabitants are asked to be happy, to enjoy the amenities, but not to roam beyond the site. The doors of their apartments remain closed; entire sections of The Center are beyond their reach.

Cipriano, however, reveals a pesky independent streak when he wanders into the underground of The Center, violating its restrictions. There he discovers a cave in which three men and three women are buried. The cave, it turns out, is the same place that Plato writes about in his famous parable of illusions, a place where people are pushed to live in darkness, observing a parade of shadows projected on the wall that are the result of the visual effect created by a bonfire. Late capitalist society, Saramago suggests, is not so different from the cave; it is a place where reality has been obliterated by deceptive appearances, where we see only shadows of ourselves.

As in Saramago's other novels, one is acutely aware of the workings of Fate in *The Cave*. Cipriano, Marta and Marçal are ultimately marionettes in a tale where they have no free will. Saramago, their creator, leaves them at the mercy of superior forces whose raison d'être they may ignore, but which shape their lives with ruthless efficiency. As we expect, The Center swallows The Periphery, as represented by Cipriano. This sense of destiny is echoed by the rhythm of Saramago's paragraphs, which often run for entire pages.

The effect of Saramago's style is mesmerizing and also emphatically mythical. That, of course, is Saramago's objective: to turn his plot into an allegory, which, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* puts it, is the "description of a subject under the guise of some other subject of aptly suggestive resemblance."

Allegory was, of course, ubiquitous in the Middle Ages, but its manichean depictions of the struggle between cosmic forces—good and evil, darkness and light—have declined in appeal with the rise of novelistic realism, with its emphasis on finely observed, well-rounded individual characters. Saramago modernizes allegory in *The Cave* because he doesn't foist too much awkward symbolism onto his protagonist. Cipriano may be a metaphor, but he is never cartoonish, and his predicament is poignantly depicted. Saramago writes, amazingly enough, with a heavy hand and a light touch. What might seem like a trite social critique in the hands of a lesser writer is a powerful commentary on the dream world we live in.

Applied to politics, however, Saramago's penchant for allegory fails him miserably. His April 21, 2002, article in *El País* was a diatribe that transformed "the well-known biblical legend of the combat between the little shepherd-boy David and the Philistine giant Goliath" into a war of adolescent Palestinian stone-throwers and hostile Israeli tanks and helicopters. The analogy isn't entirely false: Conservative military analysts like Anthony Cordesman have spoken of the struggle as a textbook case of "asymmetric warfare." But it is essential to go beyond this superficial approach: The gratuitous brutality of the Israeli army is at once a shame and a disgrace; conversely, the blind faith of Palestinian youngsters hypnotized by Hamas, who become portable bombs designed to kill civilians, is equally abhorrent. The Israeli-Palestinian discord isn't a novel, much less a biblical parable. Auschwitz isn't an allegory, and neither is Ramallah. These two human catastrophes are calamitous in their own terms and ought to be understood in their proper contexts.

An intellectual of Saramago's stature ought to know better than to inject charged biblical allusions into a problem that is already volatile enough. He's hardly the first to do so. As Saramago surely knows, fundamentalists on both sides of the conflict—the settlers and the Likud, on the one hand; Hamas and Islamic Jihad on the other—view the conflict in similarly biblical terms. In fact, the battle between Israel and Palestine isn't the latest cycle of an eternal duel between Abraham's children; rather, it is a century-old confrontation

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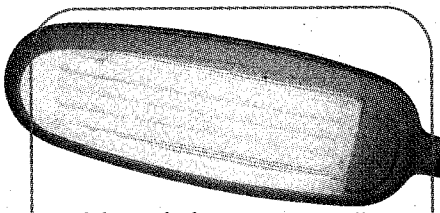

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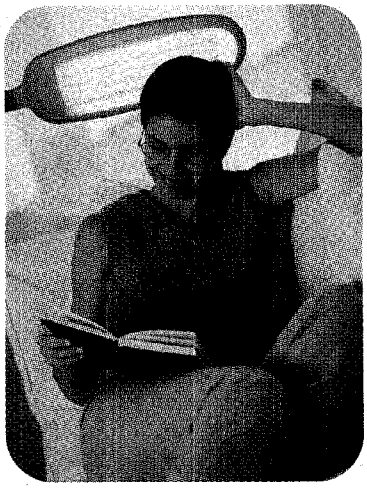

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between rival nationalisms. Likewise, the encounter between Nazism and the Jews wasn't another scene in the clash between Christ and Antichrist. Saramago's intention may have been "to shock people into understanding." Whether he succeeded is another question altogether. Is shock truly the way to bring enlightenment in a region where shock tactics are the norm in political rhetoric? Would it make sense to compare the Portuguese people of today with the cruel colonizers of Brazil in the sixteenth century?

Having read almost all of Saramago's *oeuvre*, and in spite of our dissatisfying tête-à-tête, I don't believe he is an anti-Semite. He is no T.S. Eliot. But in making grandiose pronouncements about the Middle East, he has succumbed to a familiar and dangerous temptation, one that has turned one too many sages into clowns. As *The Cave* demonstrates, the Portuguese Nobel laureate is a literary master at the peak of his talent. He is also a fool for using his reputation to misrepresent, and to confuse even further, a tragic conflict that isn't in need of obfuscating symbolism but of brave and tangible solutions. ■

FILMS

Magnificent Obsessions

STUART KLAWANS

DRACULA: PAGES FROM A VIRGIN'S DIARY • SPELLBOUND • CINEMANIA

This week, all true movie lovers will rush to see a violent and fantastic special-effects thriller, in which a character endowed with uncanny powers rips through the veil of illusion that is normal life. The movie I refer to, of course, is Guy Maddin's new, mostly black-and-white silent film, *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary*, starring Zhang Wei-Qiang. A similar-sounding picture, *The Matrix Reloaded*, happens to have opened simultaneously, but I will withhold comment on it until next week. I'd rather focus for now on the more daring and visionary film.

Imagine a pale virgin lifting forward in bed, tilting from supine to upright with her head, torso and outstretched arms fixed in entranced unison. This is how poor, flighty Lucy Westernra ought to float toward her demon lover—as if she were already severed from earthly ties. This is how she drifts up somnambulistically in Maddin's *Dracula*, an effect that's all the more startling for being achieved without wires or camera tricks. Like most of the film's characters, Lucy (Tara Birtwhistle) is played by a dancer from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, whose evening-length production of *Dracula*, choreographed by Mark Godden, is the egg in Maddin's cinematic soufflé. The dancers rise as if weightless, and so does the movie.

Escaping the pull of narrative gravity from the very first shots, this *Dracula* begins in the middle of the story and within no defined space. The plague ship is already nearing its English harbor; Lucy is already flying beyond her suitors, toward death's embrace; and mad Renfield is already rattling the bars of his cell, crying out to his master, "I hear you coming!" Of course, since this is a silent film, he's wrong—he hears only the soundtrack music, by Gustav Mahler. But Renfield's delirium is general in the film, which cuts agitatedly among disparate views and unexplained events, glimpsed in the flashes given off from an unseen lighthouse. The focus is gauzy, the contrast between light and dark exaggerated, the field of vision often contracted by an iris to give the effect of a dream picture; and it's a dream with the obsessiveness of fever, which sends jitters through the rhythm and calls up images again and again.

At this point, you might guess that Maddin has excused himself from the burden of exposition, knowing that everyone is familiar with the story of *Dracula*—and you would be half right. Maddin wants to transport you immediately to the edge of your seat, as if you, too, were Lucy, rapt in the dark. And yet, although he cuts away the connections that would help make sense of events, Maddin also spells out explanations, and does so to a fault. Intertitles printed in screaming capitals announce the presumed cause for anxiety: IMMIGRANTS! OTHERS! FROM THE EAST! The invaders are from so far in the east, in this case, that Dracula is Chinese.

Even if these intertitles looked less alarming, you might guess that their explanations had gone too far. "Others" is the decisive tip-off. Only a present-day viewer would think of using the word. It suggests a sense of superiority toward Bram Stoker and his late-Victorian readers. It makes you wonder: Can we keep Dracula at a safe distance by historicizing him? The question, implicitly flung out amid the first storm of montage, goes to the core of Maddin's art.

Put it this way: To what degree does Maddin laugh at a now-obsolete cinema, with its peculiar atmosphere, assumptions and style, and to what degree does he adore it? When he first broke into the art house circuit with *Tales From the Gimli Hospital*, the answer seemed obvious, since the year was 1988 and everything modern had supposedly become post. According to all the best gasbags, only the antiquated could seem new anymore, and then on condition that it not be taken seriously—so Maddin was typed as an ironist, who joked about a past era in order to mock his own. But by 1992, when he came out with *Careful* (his incest-haunted mountaineering film, made in imitation of early sound and early color pictures), it was becoming clear that bygone cinema really moved him, as a fetish moves a true believer. He found gorgeous possibilities in old films—so gorgeous that the lovingly engineered hisses on the soundtrack, the smeared colors, the dopey acting, the grotesquely overstated moralism, could all be felt as a confession of his work's inadequacy before its model, rather than an exposure of an earlier cinema's failings. *Careful* is ridiculous not because people back then were stupid and clumsy but because we can't live up to their dreams. (Neither could they.)

In short, Maddin is too engaged to be an ironist. He's really a practitioner of fully charged ambivalence, which emerges most strongly in *Dracula* in his approach toward the title character. In the early years of Dracula's career, audiences were expected to recoil from him; stage directors and filmmakers assumed that viewers' fear and hate would overpower their fascination. More recently—beginning with the Hammer cycle and the television series *Dark Shadows* and culminating in Coppola's film—audiences have been expected to sympathize with the vampire, or even to root for him as he wreaks havoc on a smugly mediocre world, and especially on its sexual taboos. Maddin is willingly caught in the middle of these attitudes.

To do justice to the one side, he plays up the theme of patriarchal oppression (as those familiar with "the Other" might say). Lucy's suitors don't just stab her through the heart, once she's become undead; they penetrate her with undisguised fury, after which Van Helsing (the veteran dancer and ballet

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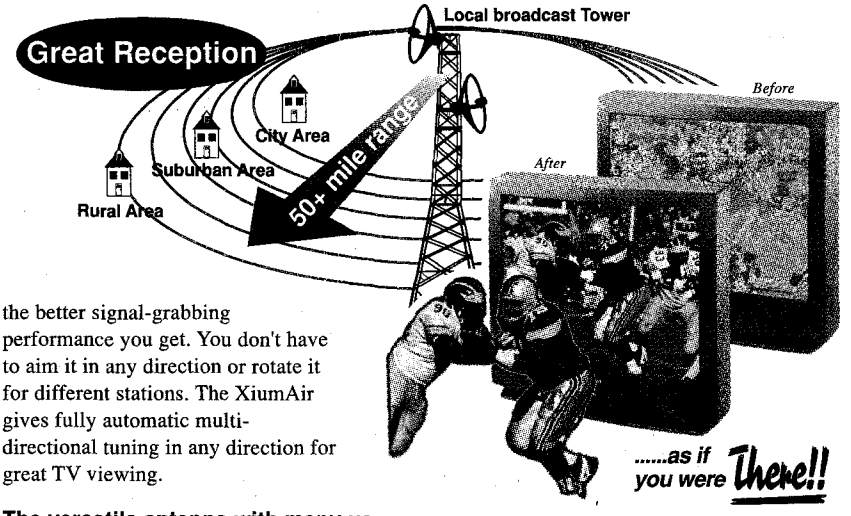

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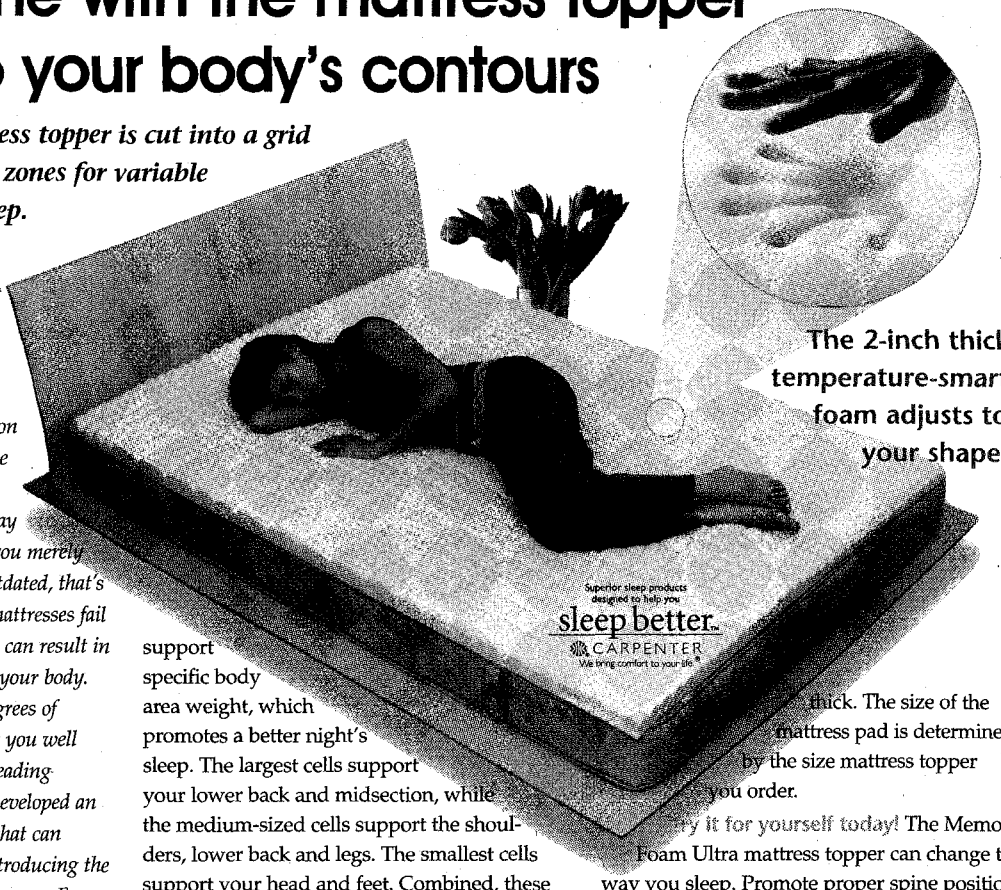

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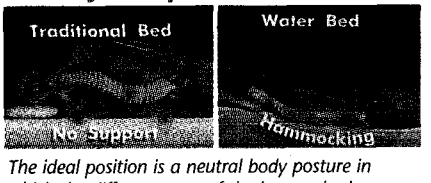

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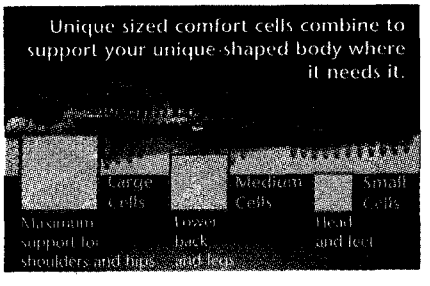
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pedagogue David Moroni) lifts her severed head and breaks into a gloating smile. Here, Maddin makes the story's normal men into villains. On the other side, he restores Dracula's creepiness. There's a chill when Dracula takes Lucy from her grave, dancing with her in the cemetery under a soapflake snowfall, beneath trees that resemble giant mushrooms. (The music, which is appropriately grotesque, is the "Frère Jacques" funeral march from Mahler's *Symphony No. 1.*) I felt a similar unease, much more than erotic rapture, during Dracula's later *pas de deux* with the nearly insubstantial Mina (Cindy Marie Small), who appears to be all eyes and cheekbones. She starts the scene by fumbling at the crotch of her fiancé (Johnny Wright), trying to give him something she thinks he needs. She ends at Dracula's breast, getting something she doesn't much seem to want. "I see Dracula as not even existing," Maddin has said in an interview. "He's just a big, pleasurable lust fluttering around from woman to woman." To which I will add, not always so pleasurable.

Can we keep Maddin's *Dracula* at a safe distance? Fortunately, the answer is no. However much it seems toylike, handmade and patently affected, this film is no more silly than one of Joseph Cornell's boxes. It's haunted by the past because we're haunted, too. It's in some measure unintelligible because we, too, don't make sense.

I needn't explain why it's ridiculous.

Short Takes: While Maddin's *Dracula* begins its US theatrical run, the theater where it premieres (New York's Film Forum) is also showing the highly praised, Oscar-nominated documentary *Spellbound*, directed by Jeffrey Blitz. Shot on video in locations from Tampa to San Clemente, the picture follows eight kids as they compete in the 1999 National Spelling Bee. The subjects, who were among the competition's 249 finalists, represent a true cross-section of the country: male and female; urban, suburban and rural; affluent and just scraping by. The range of hyphens is wide: Mexican-American, African-American, Indian-American, you-name-it-American. About the only demographic group to be excluded is stupid people—and even they show up, when a high school in Missouri puts up a congratulatory sign to its spelling "CHAPM." Having watched *Spellbound* in a packed house of civilian moviegoers, I can report that audiences find the film irresistible, even though Blitz took the risk of devoting the entire first hour to introducing his kids, one by one. My only quibble is that when the action moves to Washington and the national finals, you begin to see the unevenness of Blitz's interest in his subjects, or perhaps of his access to them. He gets remarkably close to some of the children, such as Angela, a genuinely inspiring young woman from Perryton, Texas; with others (such as Ashley, from Washington), he scarcely breaks the surface. But in Harry—one of three boys in the film, and the only one who has not yet reached puberty—he's got such a delightful Alfred E. Neuman figure that the subject's willingness to be candid is no longer even an issue. Harry is about as self-conscious as a waterfall; and though he doesn't win the competition (forgive me for spoiling some of the suspense), he's clearly the audience's choice for smart-nerd chapm.

Nerds, some of them smart, are also the subjects of Angela Christlieb and Stephen Kijak's documentary *Cinemania*, which is now opening in New York after a screening in the Tribeca Film Festival. Although I'd like to say of the characters, "There but for the grace of God," there have been periods when I could have abbreviated my response, to "There go I." The reason: *Cinemania* is about five New York residents who devote their time, energy and money to going to the movies, to the exclusion of all other activity. Those of us who have a plausible excuse for frequenting the art houses and all-media screenings know these people on sight and often wonder about them. Now, thanks to *Cinemania*, I have seen their packrat apartments, worried about their diets, listened to the chronic anger and anxiety in their well-educated voices, puzzled over the narrow profundity of their interests. The film, too, might feel narrow, if you don't have a relationship to this strange little scene. But if you've ever been tempted into an obsession with anything—stamp-collecting, pornography, baseball, soap opera—*Cinemania* might provide an hour and a half of awful fascination. ■

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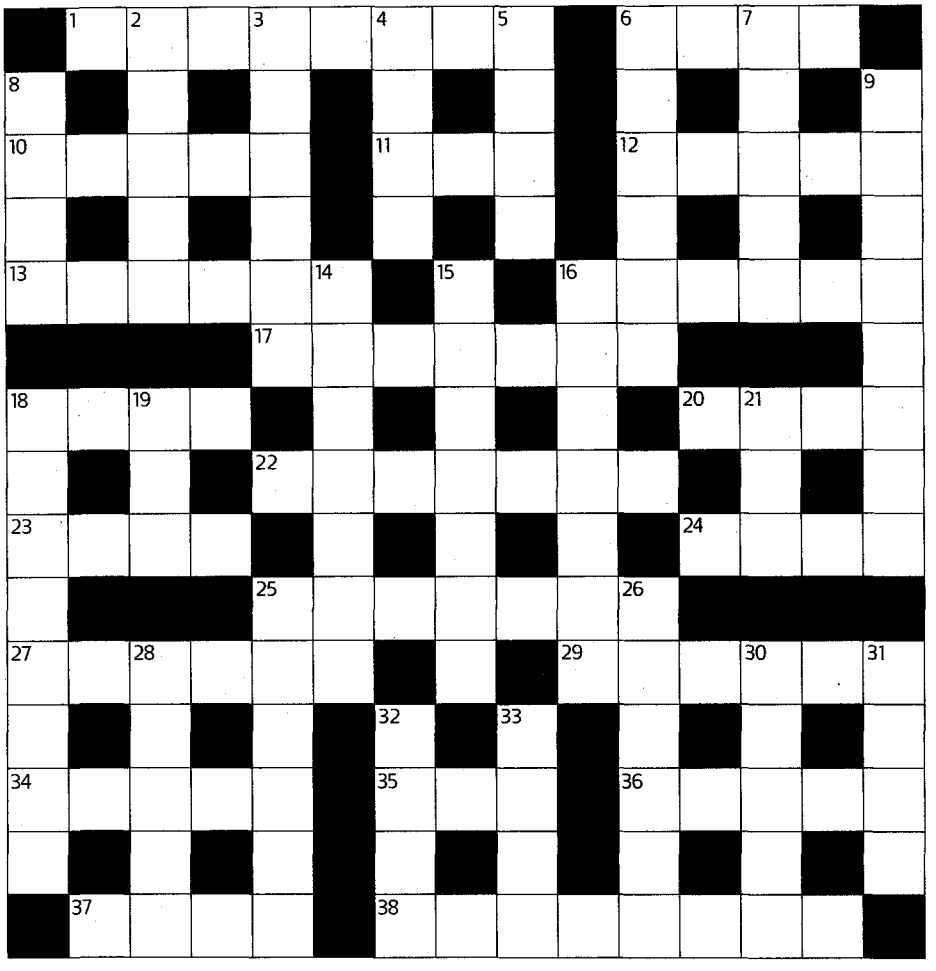

ACROSS

1 and **6** The tide, for example, may prove you switch the intake with it. (6,2,4)

10 Not exactly fun, as an acronym for a 28 action. (5)

11 and **31** down You are not necessarily asked to tell the time this way, if the expected reply might be "fill 'er up!" (3,4)

12 Where in Ireland you get to see the log is properly chopped? (5)

13 Sort of 27, or just the opposite? (6)

16 See 4 down

17 Sort of what painting is, when seen around crosswise. (7)

18 Certainly not well with 25 down and 21 when such as Shakespeare is read wrongly. (4)

20 See 2 down

22 Town in England where you can always gets chips cooked around a half of 32... (7)

23 ...and what goes with the whiskey or a softer drink. (4)

24 Don't leave the sound of tea in 11! (4)

25 Do relatives of such as Dancer and Comet prove this, or is it that you have been bitten by one? (7)

27 Is in tune, though both are confused by what the Constitution does, reputedly. (6)

29 Duck, possibly, but don't tell the truth, as the bossy type might sound. (3,3)

34 You might be asked to fill it in, but it's still empty. (5)

35 This man proved a comer on the stage. (3)

36 Perhaps found in the den, but it supposedly goes just before the equivalent of autumn. (5)

37 Fair game, though it might turn to dust. (4)

38 What Londoners go on for vacation I hold to be with 11, possibly. (8)

DOWN

2, and **19** and **20** across Feeling complete this way? (Earth-shaking, as well as sounding somewhat fishy.) (5,3,4)

3 To Jock it's no beginning to employ a bad feeling with it! (6)

4 and **16** across A cautionary statement to go slow, the way a literary midshipman acts. (4,4,2)

5 Elfish spirits start loud, but confuse 11 with it. (4)

6 It seems a way to clean up the habits of a tyrant. (6)

7 They have an afterlife with people, according to Brutus. (5)

8 Isaacson may have to "split" to show him up, with a bad use about it. (4)

9 One might find the other sly, but it's different as a stopping point. (8)

14 Flour and such might help stick things together. (7)

15 What sounds like a seabird to pull up, being other than graceful. (7)

16 A prisoner in the damp dungeon might prefer this, when serving for battery. (3,4)

18 The beginning of distemper rubs the wrong way, and gets you upset. (8)

19 See 2 down

25 and **21** down Well fitted to be what they say the fighter is if down—first and last. (6,3)

26 The little dog did, but your head needs one very quiet to the newspaperman, in brief. (6)

28 Proving a paint mixture won't work very well, if such. (5)

30 Such is not made up of cloth, as some say. (Your head? Tail? All mixed up!) (5)

31 See 11 across

32 Preceding it, you know what's going on! (4)

33 Was the new one a good one to some, even though it might be considered a false lead? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2894

W	I	L	D	C	A	T	S	■	T	R	I	K	E	S
A	■	E	■	O	■	O	■	A	■	U	■	E	■	E
T	R	A	N	C	E	S	■	C	O	M	P	E	E	R
C	■	S	■	K	■	S	■	A	■	O	■	P	■	V
H	I	T	C	H	■	U	N	D	E	R	D	O	N	E
M	■	■	■	O	■	P	■	I	■	■	■	R	■	S
A	L	T	A	R	■	S	T	A	M	P	E	D	E	■
N	■	H	■	S	■	■	■	■	■	A	■	E	■	O
■	D	E	C	E	A	S	E	D	■	R	E	R	U	N
W	■	C	■	■	■	A	■	I	■	T	■	■	■	E
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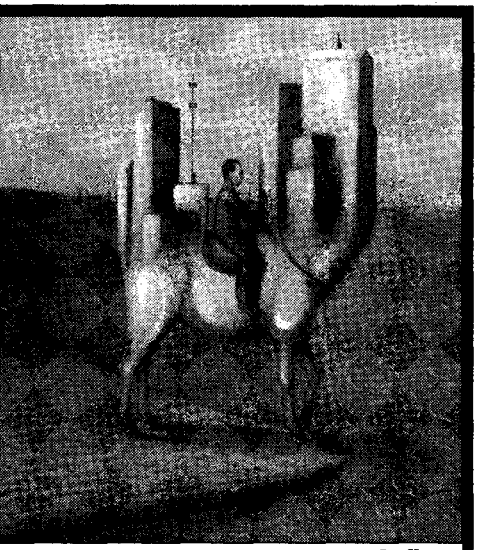

Jon Krause

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